War and British identity:
A study of Mass Observers' perceptions of the use of British military force since 1982

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In memory of Gillian Anne Jones

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Abstract

This thesis uses Mass Observation Project data as a source of evidence for individual British people's interpretations of British involvement in recent overseas military conflicts. Considering five of Britain's post-imperial and post-Cold War conflicts in the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars, it approaches these cases as objects of historical memory and considers how individuals connect these conflicts to narratives of British identity. Using an interpretative and qualitative method of analysis, it finds that, though contemporary circumstance and context are crucial in determining what is written about each case, these conflicts are given meaning through invocation of Britain's military past, primarily British experience in the Second World War. Observers' written responses across the period reveal a pervasive belief in Britain as an historical force for good, the crucible of which is British opposition to the evil of Nazi fascism and dictatorship in World War Two, and its entry into that war to defend both itself and other European nations. These connections began to fragment within the context of the 'War on Terror' and the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Popular memories of the past have been critical in framing and clarifying what observers wrote about more recent conflicts, both among those who supported the use of force and those who did not, but have also been sustained as Britain continues to deploy military force in the present. Certain aspects of British experience in World War Two have been kept alive as they retain an explanatory power over contemporary circumstances while others are omitted as they are not thought to be relevant; observers' written accounts show, in detail, how popular memories of the past have been affected by the changing context in which they are invoked and how military force is related intimately to narrative (re)constructions of national identity.

Acknowledgements

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Gillian Jones, who would have been so proud to see me complete it.

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>

Research Question and Research Design

The central question this thesis seeks to address is:

How have Mass Observers connected the use of British force and British national identity in the

Falklands (1982), Gulf (1990), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) wars?

The reasons for considering these cases – and for linking them to a subjective concept like national identity – are many. Certainly the Iraq conflict in particular sparked the interest of people who, like me, became politically aware during the early 2000s. It generated enormous media coverage within Britain due to the controversial circumstances of its occurrence, and elicited a level of popular protest unprecedented in the contemporary era.[1] Its effects have been wide-ranging and lasting,[2] affecting Britain's foreign policy direction[3] and generating new political debates related to the use of British military force.[4]

The undeniable impact of the Iraq War led me to question how individual British people have made sense of Britain's involvement not only in Iraq, but in the numerous interventions that preceded it and, in the case of Afghanistan, outlasted it. Consequently this thesis is a consideration of the non-military, domestic and ideational impacts of

[1] James Strong, *Public Opinion, Legitimacy and Tony Blair's War in Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2017); James Strong, "More Spinn'd Against than Spinning?: Public Opinion, Political Communication, and Britain's Involvement in the 2003 Invasion of Iraq", PhD dissertation (The LSE, London, 2012); Christoph Bluth, "The British road to war: Blair, Bush and the decision to invade Iraq", *International Affairs*. 80, no. 5 (2004): 871-892.
[2] Louise Fawcett, "The Iraq War Ten Years On: Assessing the Fallout", *International Affairs*. 89, no. 2 (2013): 325-343.
[3] David Wearing, "Militarism or Internationalism: British Foreign Policy at a Crossroads", *Soundings*. 62, no. 1 (2016): 121-137.
[4] Philip Towle, *Going to War: British Debates from Wilberforce to Blair* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 1-10.

recent wars. It is not primarily an investigation of public opinion as it asks more specifically what effects Britain's overseas deployments have had on perceptions of Britain's history, identity and place in the world. It asks how individuals in Britain interpret modern conflicts, what they mean for the nation, and how they might affect perceptions of Britain's history and identity.

Of course, personal interest is not sufficient in determining the focus of academic research. Nor is it sufficient in the selection of cases or phenomena.[5] I have selected my cases because together they represent important events in Britain's recent political and social history, and because they represent a distinct era of military activity largely unmoored from the end of empire or the Cold War.

It is worth restating here that armed conflict has been a persistent feature of British history. The United Kingdom has been a significant international and military actor since the inception of the British state in 1707, and was frequently engaged in continental and imperial wars including, but not limited to, the War of Spanish Succession, colonial conflicts in India, the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.[6] In the modern era Britain armed millions of soldiers to fight from 1914 to 1918[7] and again from 1939 to 1945,[8] and continued to conscript men of service age until 1960.[9] Britain was a major contributor during the Korean War (1950-1953)[10] and engaged in multiple conflicts, police actions, crises and emergencies throughout the early Cold War era; notably in Greece, Palestine, Malaya, Egypt, Kenya, Cyprus and southern Arabia.[11]

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[5] Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.

[6] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (5th ed. London: Yale University Press, 2014).

[7] Though conscription began in 1916 and ended in 1920.

[8] Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle* (London: Penguin, 2017).

[9] Richard Vinen, *National Service: Conscription in Britain, 1945-1963* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 4-5.

[10] Grace Huxford, "The Korean War Never Happened: Forgetting a Conflict in British Culture and Society", *Twentieth Century British History*. 27, no. 2 (2016): 195-219.

[11] Michael Burleigh, *Small Wars, Far Away Places* (London: MacMillan, 2013). See, also; Ian Cobain, Ewen MacAskill and Katy Stoddard, "Britain's 100 Years of Conflict", *The Guardian* (2014) Online,

The later Cold War (from the 1960s) saw British force used less frequently as the period of decolonisation came to an end, the conclusion of the Vietnam War and détente heralded reduced international tensions, and the eruption of violent conflict in Northern Ireland focused attention closer to home. Domestic and economic considerations prescribed a shift from the foreign policy of a great power to one focused more narrowly on Western and European cooperation.[12]

The deployment of a Task Force to recapture the Falkland Islands by military means in 1982 followed a period of relative inactivity for the British military, yet it can be seen as part of a broader history of overseas conflict. Large-scale deployments followed in the Persian Gulf in 1990, in the Balkans from 1995, in Sierra Leone in 2000, and in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 and 2003 respectively. Conflicts including and since the Falklands War are however, distinguishable from those previous due to their very different context and circumstances in that none were linked to resistance to fascism or communism. As James Cronin describes, the Gulf War of 1990-1991 was part of the reordering of international politics which brought the post-Cold War world into view for its protagonists. Cronin writes of a fishing retreat near Lake Baikal, Russia, in which Soviet Foreign Minister, Edouard Shevardnadze and US Secretary of State, James Baker, "agreed that this [the USSR's vote for Resolution 678 sanctioning the use of military force against Iraq] was the moment when the Cold War actually ended."[13]

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available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/ng-interactive/2014/feb/11/britain-100-years-of-conflict (Accessed 23-08-2017).

[12] Helen Parr, "Britain, America, East of Suez and the EEC: Finding a Role in British Foreign Policy, 1964-67", *Contemporary British History*. 20, no. 3 (2006): 403-421; Alex May, "The Commonwealth and Britain's Turn to Europe, 1945-73", *The Round Table*. 102, no. 1 (2013): 29-39; David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy since 1945* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2017),120-131.

[13] James Cronin, *Global Rules: America, Britain and a Disordered World* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 207.

The conclusion of the Gulf War revealed America's apparent 'unipolar moment'[14] in which, among other vast changes within international politics, the USA and its allies (including Britain) were free to pursue new forms of military intervention. The overwhelming victory achieved by the allied coalition in the Gulf War arguably made military intervention more palatable as an instrument of foreign policy; it led to a "perspective that took as its starting point the so-called 'revolution in military affairs' that was brought about by advanced technology and that led, more or less directly, to a willingness to use the new and more sophisticated weapons and to adopt military solutions for the problems of the post-Cold War world."[15]

Britain took part in the Gulf War, and has taken a leading role in military interventions since, albeit as a junior partner of the United States. However, I suggest here that Britain's post-Cold War use of military force, and the new era of British foreign policy in which it was fostered, originated earlier with a successful campaign to retake the Falklands Islands after their occupation by Argentina. As Lawrence Freedman concludes his official history:

At the end of 1982, in a paper for the British International Studies Association, I suggested that in its political aspects the Falklands might turn out to be a precursor of things to come, in the role allotted to the United Nations, the importance of the principle of self-determination, and a line-up that was neither East-West nor North-South, that it is reflected but was not dominated by either the cold war or anti-colonialism. At the time this was greeted with a degree of scepticism, but in retrospect this argument seems justified… so while in many respects this conflict still stands out as an anomaly in

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[14] For a consideration of American dominance after the end of the Cold War in the context of domestic and international transformation in the preceding decades, see: Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[15] Cronin, *Global Rules*, 216.

recent international history, the last war of a past imperial era, in others it can now be recognised as one of the first of the coming post-Cold War era.[16]

With historical retrospect, the period between 1982 and 2014 (the latter date marked by the return of British combat forces from Helmand, Afghanistan) is one denoted by a transformation in Britain's world role. Britain's post-Cold War experience has been one marked at least partially by continued military activity. Its major engagements in the Balkans, Afghanistan and twice in Iraq demand consideration if only because they represent a distinct departure from previous eras and a remarkably frequent use of military force. While there have been other deployments overseas – most notably in Sierra Leone in 2000 – I focus here on the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns for two reasons; firstly because they are all high profile events which pertain to an important social impact, and secondly because deployments to Bosnia and Sierra Leone are not represented within the source data I have used. Both points are explained more fully in the following sections.

Of course, these conflicts were pursued within various circumstances and for a variety of reasons. The Falklands War was fought outside the paradigm of the Cold War – predicated on the recovery of sovereign territory - and was interpreted as a reversal of Britain's domestic and international post-War decline.[17] Foreign intervention in the Gulf was aimed at protecting Kuwaiti sovereignty and thereby affirming a US-led, rules-based international order.[18] Intervention in Kosovo represented both a testing ground for, and arguably a vindication of, New Labour's ethical foreign policy, serving to reinforce the

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[16] Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Volume II, War and Diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 2005), 643.
[17] David George Boyce, *The Falklands War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 171-190.
[18] Lawrence Freedman and Ephraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

principal and possibility of humanitarian military intervention.[19] While these ideas figured heavily in the decision to use force in Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq in 2003, both deployments formed part of the newly declared 'War on Terror'; a policy prescription in which the norms of humanitarianism intermingled with a newly invigorated neo-conservativism based on pre-emption, regime change and 'liberal peacebuilding'.[20] The material and political impacts of the Iraq War in particular have been far-reaching in the Middle East, the Western states that prosecuted it, and in the wider world.[21] Iraq has cast a shadow over later interventions in Libya and Syria the aims of which have been narrowed to the 'degradation and destruction'[22] of specific terrorist groups. The subsequent *modus operandi* of British military intervention (until the time of writing) has been accordingly enervated, limited to the training of friendly local forces and supporting air strikes.

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[19] Roberto Belloni, "The Trouble with Humanitarianism", *Review of International Studies*. 33, no. 1 (2007): 451-474; Dan Bulley, "Home is Where the Human is? Ethics, Intervention and Hospitality in Kosovo", *Millennium*. 39, no. 1 (2010): 43-63; Oliver Daddow, "'Tony's War'? Blair, Kosovo and the Interventionist Impulse in British Foreign Policy", *International Affairs*. 85, no. 3 (2009): 547-560; Oliver Daddow and Pauline Schnapper, "Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 26, no. 2 (2013): 330-349; Jamie Gaskarth, "Interpreting Ethical Foreign Policy: Traditions and Dilemmas for Policymakers", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 15, no. 1 (2013): 192-209; Dan Keohane, "From Suez to Kosovo: British Political Parties on the Use of Force", *Contemporary British History*. 17, no. 2 (2003): 29-48; David McCourt, "Rethinking Britain's Role in the World for a New Decade: The Limits of Discursive Therapy and the Promise of Field Theory", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 13, no. 2 (2011): 145-164; David McCourt, "Embracing Humanitarian Intervention: Atlanticism and the UK Interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 15, no. 2 (2013): 246-262; Paul Williams, "Who's making UK foreign policy?"', *International Affairs*. 80, no. 5 (2004): 909-929. See also: Jamie Gaskarth, Robin Porter and Timothy Edmunds, *British Foreign Policy and the National Interest* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

[20] Alex Danchev, "Tony Blair's Vietnam: The Iraq War and the 'special relationship' in historical perspective", *Review of International Studies*. 33, no. 2 (2007): 189-203; Toby Dodge, "Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding: The Application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq", *Review of International Studies*. 39, no. 5 (2013): 1189-1212; Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Rhiannon Vickers, "'Blowback' for Britain?: Blair, Bush, and the War in Iraq", *Review of International Studies*. 33, no. 2 (2007): 205-221; Patrick Porter, "Last Charge of the Knights? Iraq, Afghanistan and the Special Relationship", *International Affairs*. 86, no. 2 (2010): 355-375; Jason Ralph, "After Chilcot: The 'Doctrine of International Community' and the UK Decision to Invade Iraq", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 13, no. 3 (2011): 203-325.

[21] Fawcett, "The Iraq War".

[22] Britain's contribution to the military effort against ISIS in Syria was outline by then Prime Minister, David Cameron in 2014. See, Peter Dominiczak, "Three-year battle 'to degrade and destroy Isil", *The Telegraph* (2014) Online, available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11078812/Three-year-battle-to-degrade-and-destroy-Isil.html (Accessed 19-12-2017).

The period is then, one of variation in circumstance. Not only do these conflicts represent a quantitative (in terms of the number of conflicts fought) and qualitative (in terms of the reasons for their pursuit) departure from the end of empire and the Cold War, they also represent a multifarious and complex period of shifting norms related to the use of British force, and the way in which Britain has been aligned in the international sphere in relation to other states and allies.[23] They require study together in order to gain a sense of how these conflicts have affected British politics in the recent past, and thus its trajectory into the future.

Studies of 'high politics', foreign policy and strategy across this period abound. My aim here is to explore more intimately the relationship this period of military conflict has had with the citizens in whose names it has been prosecuted, and how these conflicts affect the ways in which individuals relate to Britain and its history. I approach them with an understanding that the prosecution of war is linked closely to the construction and reconstruction of shared ideas of national identity, articulated by British people who are not directly involved or included within the policy-makers, elites, politicians and experts who constitute the British state. Indeed, Britain's identity and nationhood is bound at least partially to its military past and its involvement in wars. I explore, using an individual-level analysis, how interpretations of Britain's more recent conflicts relate to constructions of Britain's history and identity.

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[23] Per Becker, "Vulnerability and Nationalism: The Support for the War Against Iraq in Five Established States", *Nations and Nationalism*. 15, no. 2 (2009): 340-360; Danchev, "Tony Blair's Vietnam"; Michael F. Hopkins, "Focus of a Changing Relationship: The Washington Embassy and Britain's World Role since 1945", *Contemporary British History*. 12, no. 3 (1998): 103-114.

War, National Identity and Memory

Firstly then, it is important to consider how war is connected to national identity. Military conflicts contribute to the construction of the identities of communities by whom, and on whose behalf, they are prosecuted. I draw on a concept of British nationhood here that contrasts the formal structures of the state, and is rooted in Benedict Anderson's conception of an "imagined community";[24] one in which the self is linked to a communal identity that is psychologically and socially constructed. Britain is not a self-evident, primordial entity,[25] but is referred to throughout this work, as Linda Colley has described, as a "culturally and ethnically diverse, problematic, protean and artificial [construct]";[26] an "invented nation superimposed… onto much older alignments and loyalties."[27] Other community identities existed before the creation of a British nation-state in the eighteenth century – ethnic, religious[28] and, in the case of England and Scotland in particular, national[29] – and though it is difficult to disentangle British identity from other modes or

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[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

[25] For an overview of theory related to nationalism and national identity, see; Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).
Most academic considerations of national identity draw on the 'modernist' conception of which the nation is not material or tangible, but is a social construct linking individuals to a wider national community. The conditions under which it came into being in North American and Europe were specific to the modern period. Large-scale printing, mass culture and society and industrial revolution helped to create a sense community much broader than the local. For modernist analyses, see, for example: Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson *What is a Nation: Europe, 1989-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Stefan Berger, *Germany* (London: Arnold, 2004); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Vincent R. Comerford, *Ireland* (London: Arnold, 2003); Nicholas Doumanis, *Italy* (London: Arnold, 2000); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Henrietta Harrison, *China* (London: Arnold, 2001); Sinisa Malesevic, *Nation-States and Nationalisms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); Vera Tolz, *Russia* (London: Arnold, 2000).

[26] Colley, *Britons*, 6.

[27] Ibid., 6.

[28] For an overview of theoretical debates in this area, see: Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism", *Annual Review of Sociology*. 35, no. 1 (2009): 21-42.
For a consideration of the role of violence within the 'Ethnosymbolist' school of thought on national identity – one in which pre-existing religious and ethnic identities are said to be more important than purely modern circumstance – see: John Hutchinson, "Warfare and the Sacralisation of Nations: The Meanings, Rituals and Politics of National Remembrance", *Millennium*. 38, no. 2 (2009): 401-417; Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnie and Nation in the Modern World", *Millennium*. 14, no. 2 (1985): 127-142.

[29] Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood, "Introduction", in *A Union of Multiple Identities*, edited by Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Norman

forms, I focus here on Britain because of its pre-eminence as a mode of national identification within the related literature,[30] because of its closer alignment with the British state and military, and because military force has been pursued in the British national interest.

National identity is also fundamentally a temporal construct.[31] Nations, including the British nation, exist because they are thought to possess a shared, common history by its members, one which conveys a sense of uniqueness and antiquity.[32] Though of course this shared sense of a common past incorporates a wide variety of elements and events, war and military conflict have been crucial, particularly in Europe where "Most nation-states that came into existence before the mid-20th century were created by war or had their boundaries defined by wars or internal violence."[33] Military violence is an extraordinary aspect within the construction of national identities as it involves making sense of extraordinary conditions; the emotive force of the nation as a form of identification for individuals results from its status as a focus for "blood sacrifice".[34] Certainly, warfare has been a consistent feature of the construction, or 'forging', of British identity from its inception in the eighteenth century, predicated on a Protestant

Davies, *The Isles* (London: Papermac, 2000); Robert Tombs, *The English and their History* (London: Penguin Random House, 2015); Richard Weight, *Patriots* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002).
For a consideration of contemporary Englishness within the context of a multi-national, British identity, see: Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[30] Krishnan Kumar, "Negotiating English identity: Englishness, Britishness and the future of the United Kingdom", *Nations and Nationalism*. 16, no. 3 (2010): 469-487.
[31] For a discussion of the ontological basis of nations as a 'bounded community' in which temporal space is central, see: Felix Berenskoetter, "Parameters of a National Biography", *European Journal of International Relations*. 20, no. 1 (2014): 262-288.
[32] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 11.
[33] Hutchinson, "Sacralisation of Nations", 401.
See also: Susan-Mary Grant, "Raising the Dead: war, memory and American national identity", *Nations and Nationalism*. 11, no. 4 (2005): 509-529.
[34] Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.
See also: Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11-13.
For a sociological discussion of the importance of military sacrifice in the creation of community identities, see: Sinisa Malesevic, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 180-191.

imperial mission and contest with Catholic, absolutist continental powers. Linda Colley describes the importance of military conflict in clarifying foundational ideas of British identity:

> It [British identity] was an invention forged above all by war. Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And, increasingly as the wars went on, many of them defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour.[35]

Military conflict offered a way for the distinctions between national groups to come into focus through a process of 'Othering'.[36] Perceptions of British identity were clarified by contrast against those who were fought. Again, for Robert Tombs, famous battles against the French (in this case perhaps the most famous at Waterloo in 1815) were imbued with extra meanings about what it meant to be British:

> The dramatic and bloody battle – Wellington's army suffered 15,000 casualties, nearly one man in four – gave rise to powerful legends, with echoes even now. Both sides thought that the battle was more than just a physical struggle. The two commanders and their armies seemed to represent national and ideological opposites. Wellington's army embodied stoical resistance to Napoleon's

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[35] Colley, *Britons*, 6.

[36] Othering is a term with specific meanings in social research which I deploy here, and throughout, in a broad sense of forming one's own identity by contrast with a perceived 'Other'. For an overview, see: Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Othering, Identity Formation and Agency", *Qualitative Studies*. 2, no. 1 (2011): 63-78. In regard to recent military interventions, see: Tarak Barkawi, "'Small Wars' and Big Consequences: From Korea to Iraq", *Globalizations*. 6, no. 1 (2009): 127-131; Tarak Barkawi, "From War to Security: Security Studies, the Wider Agenda and the Fate of the Study of War", *Millennium*. 39, no. 3 (2011): 701-716.

bold aggressiveness: tradition against revolution, British phlegm against *furia Francese* – 'established character' against 'angry and turbulent passions', as a British newspaper put it later.[37]

Of course, constructions of British identity have never been singular or static. Competing ideas and narratives are in constant negotiation as individual and group perspectives on the national past differ. Likewise the relationship between individuals and the national community transforms as circumstances change. A belief in Protestantism and imperial expansion are – though of course retaining an important legacy – no longer primary ways in which British identity is conceived, given the increasingly secular and multicultural nature of its society, and the profoundly transformative process of decolonisation which took place from the late 1940s.[38] These transformations in British international and domestic politics have, it is argued, led to a contemporary re-ignition of a broad debate about 'Britishness' and the cohesiveness of British identity.[39]

War however, remains a consistent feature in Britain's more recent history and at this point it is important to explain how military conflicts have become central to the contemporary construction of British identities. I argue here that wars retain their place as part of a "common sense of the past"[40] through the dynamics of memory, the study of which has undergone a 'boom' within academia over the last few decades,[41] and it is from

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[37] Tombs, *The English*, 413.

[38] Colley, *Britons*, 7.
For debate on the ways in which imperialism retains an important social grip in the contemporary period, and the ways in which it remains contested, see for example: N. C. Fleming, "Echoes of Britannia: Television History, Empire and the Critical Public Sphere", *Contemporary British History*. 24, no. 1 (2010): 1-22; Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[39] Bikhu Parekh, "Defining British National Identity", *Political Quarterly*. 71, no. 1 (2000): 251-262; Bikhu Parekh, "Being British", *Political Quarterly*. 78, no. 1 (2007): 32-40.
For a discussion of the imminent 'Break up of Britain', see: Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London: NLM, 1977). For a more recent discussion placed within the context of the end of the Second World War, see: David McCrone, "Unmasking Britannia: the rise and fall of British national identity", *Nations and Nationalism*. 3, no. 4 (1997): 579-596.

[40] Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6.

[41] Duncan Bell, "Introduction: Violence and Memory", *Millennium*. 38, no. 2 (2009): 345-360; Jay Winter, "The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the 'Memory Boom' in Contemporary Historical Studies," *Canadian Military History*. 10, no. 3 (2001): 57-66.

studies of British war memory that I draw a theoretical understanding and to which I hope to contribute.

In the twentieth century, Britain has been involved in two world wars, both of which elicited mass mobilisation, suffering and trauma.[42] Naturally they involved the lived experiences of individuals, and pertained to the individual memories of the people caught up in them, yet those personal experiences are constantly in negotiation with broader, public interpretations in which lived experience forms part of a shared past.[43] Sources of evidence in which these shared, popular memories of the past can be uncovered are various, ranging from place names to personal diaries to popular film and literature, but are distinguished by popular appeal – that is to say that they are produced by or represent the shared beliefs of 'ordinary' people - rather than their academic or historical validity.[44]

In recent decades memory has been conceptualised across a variety of vectors and scales,[45] with increasing focus on the transnational character of remembrance.[46] Memory

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[42] The study of memory is not necessarily related to trauma or sacrifice, but there remains an abundant, cross-disciplinary body of work related to the connections between the too. Loss or death in war catalyse the dynamics of memory and imbue remembrance with greater urgency. See, for example: T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics", in *The Politics of War Commemorations*, edited by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (London: Routledge, 2000); Bell, "Violence and Memory"; W. James Booth, "Kashmir Road: Some Reflections on Memory and Violence", *Millennium*. 38, no. 2 (2009): 361-377; Jeffrey K. Olick, "'Collective Memory': A Memoir and Prospect", *Memory Studies*. 1, no. 1 (2007): 20-25; Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices", *Annual Review of Sociology*. 24, no. 1 (1998): 105-41.

[43] For an overview of scholarship related to war memory, see the edited collections: Martin Evans and Kenneth Lunn, *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berg, 1997); Patrick Finney, *Remembering the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 2011); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[44] Popular culture, including television, film, radio and printed literature and images is a primary source of uncovering both popular attitudes and popular representations of the past. For examples of works in Britain's historical identity and shared understandings of its past are revealed through film and printed images, see: Geoffrey Hurd, *National Fictions: World War Two in British Film and Television* (London: BFI, 1984); Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation* (London: Reaktion, 2000); Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).
Raphael Samuel listed and explored the various forms, expressions and sources of popular memory. See: Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 8-17.

[45] See: Patrick Finney "Introduction", in *Remembering the Second World War*, edited by Patrick Finney (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

of the Holocaust is perhaps the best example in this regard, offering not only a "touchstone for evil in the modern world"[47] but also an experience which is relayed across regional and state boundaries.[48] Yet memories of past conflicts remain disputed even as combatant nations engage in increasingly complex forms of integration.[49] Thus war is remembered in Britain primarily as part of a *national* story – having been fought by and on behalf of the nation and its interests, or even survival, and against other distinct national communities – in which British experience was unique and imbued specific ideas of identity for its citizens[50] though again, such memories remain contested among individuals and groups within society.[51]

Often historians refer to these shared or common interpretations about the past as 'myths'.[52] As Mark Connelly suggests, in relation to war memory, myth is not synonymous with "falsification",[53] rather it is meant to suggest the flexible and selective process of remembrance which is constantly active in the present, and which functions by

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[46] For scholarship focused primarily on the transnational and international proliferation of cultural/popular war memories, see the special edition: "Traveling War", *History and Memory*. 27, no. 2 (2015).

[47] Daniel Levy and Natan Szaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006),18.

[48] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[49] Peter J. Verovsek, "Expanding Europe through Memory: The Shifting Content of the Ever-Salient Past", *Millennium*. 42, no. 2 (2014): 531-550. For a specific example of tensions between contemporary national and transnational European memories of the battle of Waterloo, see: Jasper Heinzein, "A Negotiated Truce: The Battle of Waterloo in European Memory since the Second World War", *History and Memory*. 26, no. 1 (2014): 39-74.

[50] The ways in which memories of the past contribute to national identities in the present is explored in the edited collections: Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu, eds. *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Jeffrey Olick, ed. *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts and Transformations in National Retrospect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). For a discussion of the ways in which memories of the origins of World War Two have been figured along national lines, see: Patrick Finney, *Remembering the Road to World War Two* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[51] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 290-293.
For a consideration of the ways in which Chinese and Japanese memories of the Second World War, and inferences of national identity, have been mobilised by political elites in order to satisfy the political needs of the present, see: Yinan He, "Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006", *History and Memory*. 19, no. 2 (2007): 43-74.

[52] The concepts of myth and mythology within social research is often linked to work of Roland Barthes, where it is considered to be a linguistic device in which the past is crystallised into particular narrative forms. See: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 2012).

[53] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 1.

giving particular meaning to the past through narrative.[54] While I do not use the term myth in this research – as I do not seek to appraise or suggest the existence of a mythology of Britain's recent wars or any previous events – it is important to state that neither do I consider memory to be reducible to lived experience and recollection alone. Memories of past events such as military conflict are simultaneously personal and collective; private and public.[55] As such they exist within the imagination of those who were not alive during their constituent events. Those born after 1945 still 'remember' Britain's experience in the Second World War as it is transmitted over time. Scholars refer variously to 'collective', 'social', 'popular', 'post'[56] and – related specifically to the remembrance of other people's trauma – 'prosthetic'[57] memory, all of which capture to some degree the broader, shared quality of invoking the communal past.[58] Throughout this research I refer primarily to 'popular' memories; those which are transmitted across generations and contain within them specific narratives of the past, including Britain's national experience and identity.

The manner in which these popular memories are transmitted over time is important in defining their meanings and content. There are of course, social dynamics which affect what is remembered about past events and what is not. Unwillingness to reveal certain personal experiences like, for example, fear or regret, mean that they

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[54] Connelly is particularly critical of works which are intended simply to 'debunk' myths of the past, suggesting that there exists a truthful account of experience in wartime and that subsequent myths are inaccurate rather than selective or malleable. See, for example: Nicholas Harman, *Dunkirk: The Necessary Myth* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1981); Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (London: Cardinal, 1990).

[55] Popular memories rest on the interpretative agency of individuals and the memories they draw on from lived experience, yet popular and public memories of the past shaped these individual narratives, even among those with first-hand experience of war or combat. See: Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11-15; Lucy Noakes, "Gender and British National Identity in Wartime: A Study of the Links Between Gender and National Identity in Britain in the Second World War, the Falklands War, and the Gulf War", PhD dissertation (University of Sussex, Brighton, 1996), 15-17.

[56] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

[57] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[58] For an overview of the various types and scales of memory related to World War Two, see: Finney, "Introduction"; Lucy Noakes, and Juliette Pattinson, "Introduction", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

inevitably remain personal and unshared, not contributing to public, popular memory.[59] The construction of popular memory always rests on the contribution of individual and personal memories, but the way in which the latter surfaces is always affected by the social pressures and cultural norms of everyday life. The effects of "accident, confusion and avarice"[60] are an important part in the ongoing renegotiation of the past.

Further, these immediate social pressures are accompanied by the broader impact of the political and cultural context in which popular memories are invoked and re-invoked. Indeed, remembrance is an active process in which events are selectively tied together to create narrative and meaning,[61] and in which the past is 'mediated' and 'articulated' in the present; not simply recalled.[62] Thus popular memories of wartime experience, and the narratives of Britain's identity which they transmit, are constantly reworked in the present, as what is remembered about past wars is used to explain contemporary circumstance. Popular memories must retain both purchase with personal or lived experience,[63] but must also retain a relevancy or "explanatory power"[64] in the present in order to survive.[65] This has led some scholars to emphasise the 'invented'[66]

[59] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 119-121;Lucy Noakes, "The BBC's 'People's War' website and memories of fear in wartime in 21st-century Britain", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Noakes, "Gender and British National Identity", 7-8; Daniel Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 222-224.

[60] Todman, *The Great War*, 223.

[61] Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "The politics of war memory"; Bell, "Violence and Memory"; Connelly, *We Can Take It!*; Mark Freeman, "Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative", in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2010); Hutchinson, "Sacralisation of Nations"; Jeffrey Olick, "Introduction" in *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts and Transformations in National Retrospect*, edited by Jeffrey Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Olick, "'Collective Memory'"; Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies".

[62] Susannah Radstone, "Reconceiving Binaries: the Limits of Memory", *History Workshop Journal*. 59, no. 1 (2005): 134-150.

[63] Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998), 13.

[64] Todman, *The Great War*, 223.

[65] For a consideration of a 'forgotten' war, see: Huxford, "The Korean War".

[66] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

nature of popular memories and to highlight the power relations at work when memories of the national past are articulated with urgency:

[Popular memories are] constantly renewed in political and ideological contexts, as political leaders seek to turn them to their own advantage and as interpreters, notably in mass media of communication, seek to project new versions for our consumption.[67]

A definition of popular memory as an aggregate of personal experiences does not account for the ways in which politics alter what can be and is remembered; yet a purely 'invented' conception does not make adequate space for the agency of 'ordinary' people in contributing to this ongoing process of remembrance, the personal and familial transmission of lived experiences,[68] or the 'social agency' of the individual people engaged in remembering the past.[69] Studies of popular memory must acknowledge the mutually constitutive nature of personal, private experience and collective, public narratives,[70] and acknowledge that individual representations of the past "cannot, in concrete studies, be readily unscrambled from the effects of dominant historical discourses."[71]

Popular memories of the world wars continue to inform constructions of British identity in the contemporary era. The mass mobilisation involved in these conflicts meant that wartime experience was felt pervasively and profoundly across British society. The First World War reordered not only the political and ideological make-up of Europe,[72] but

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[67] Martin Shaw, "Past wars and present conflicts: from the Second World War to the Gulf", in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Martin Evans and Kevin Lunn (New York: Berg, 1997), 193.
[68] Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "The politics of war memory", 11.
[69] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the framework", in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[70] Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11-15.
[71] Popular Memory Group, "Popular memory: theory, politics, method", in *Making Histories*, edited by Richard Johnson (London: Hutchinson, 1982).
[72] David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

also produced lasting popular memories rooted in the search for meaning in massive trauma.[73] As contemporary circumstances changed popular memory of the First World War underwent subsequent transformation as later generations sought to use the past to explain the present.[74] The war became the subject of voluminous popular literature, its cultural reception helping to figure what was remembered, and placing the image of British soldiers and trench warfare at the core of subsequent representations.[75] The political and social impacts of the conflict have become less prominent in popular memory while an ambiguity over its legitimacy became a salient feature of its social legacy in later decades. At the time of the war, and immediately after, British people were supportive of the effort to halt apparent German aggression; only in the mid-twentieth century did ideas related to the futility or pointlessness of the war, fuelled by the context of the Cold War nuclear security dilemma, become associated specifically with the death and destruction of the trenches.[76]

Though memory of the First World War shaped what was thought about Britain's entry into and experience of World War Two,[77] it is popular memory of the latter which is more widely thought to have informed contemporary constructions of British identity, and had a greater impact within society subsequently.[78] World War Two has remained so prominent in British political and cultural life since 1945 both because of the massive

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[73] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jay Winter, *Remembering War* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

[74] Todman, *The Great War*.

[75] Matthew S. Adams, "Herbert Read and the Fluid Memory of the First World War: Poetry, Prose and Polemic", *Historical Research*. 88, no. 1 (2015): 333-354; Ian Isherwood, "The British Publishing Industry and Commercial Memories of the First World War", *War in History*. 23, no. 3 (2016): 323-340; Helen B. McCartney, "The First World War Soldier and his Contemporary Image in Britain", *International Affairs*. 90, no. 2 (2014): 299-315; Todman, *The Great War*, 1-42.

[76] Marlene A. Briggs, "Dis/composing the First World War in Britain: Trauma and Commemoration in the Testimony of Harry Patch, 1998-2008", *History and Memory*. 28, no. 1 (2016): 71-109; Heather Jones, "Goodbye to all that? Memory and Meaning in the Commemoration of the First World War", *Juncture*. 20, no. 4 (2014): 287-291; Todman, *The Great War*, 221.

[77] Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*.

[78] For an overview, see: Smith, *Britain and 1940*; Connelly, *We Can Take It!*; Noakes and Pattinson "Introduction".

sacrifice and trauma it engendered – and thus a need to make sense of this retrospectively – but also because popular memories of the war have retained an explanatory power over the present. As Lucy Noakes has identified, popular memory of the Second World War helped to explain and clarify perspectives on Britain's conflicts in the Falklands and Gulf wars. Contemporary interpretations were refracted through gendered identities shaped by wartime experience decades later as men and women drew on differing personal and popular memories to make sense of conflict in the present.[79] World War Two has become an increasingly important object of memory in Europe after the geopolitical and technological tumult of the end of the Cold War,[80] despite its steady transition into purely popular, social or collective memory as its participant generation dwindle.[81]

Of course popular memories of the Second World War have also been subject to change as a result of the shifting political and cultural circumstances in which they are invoked.[82] Personal experiences that did not fit with prevailing narratives of identity in the war have been omitted as individuals involved did not publicly articulated their experiences, or as official commemorations have not made space for them. As social circumstances change, so can dominant narratives about the past. For example, the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command received a memorial only in the late 1990s after a concerted effort on behalf of veterans for recognition of their contribution to Britain's war effort. The preceding absence of a memorial reveals both the incongruence of Britain's campaign of strategic bombing with a popular memory of Britain's role in 'the good

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[79] Noakes, *War and the British*, 167-170.
[80] Dan Stone, *Goodbye to All That? The Story of Europe since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); David Reynolds, "World War II and Modern Meanings", *Diplomatic History*. 25, no. 3 (2001): 457-472.
[81] Patrick Finney, "Politics and technologies of authenticity: the Second World War at the close of living memory", *Rethinking History*. 21, no. 2. (2017): 154-170.
[82] For example, see: Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 14-22; Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 11-14; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 1-10; Noakes, *War and the British* 10-14; Noakes and Pattinson, "Introduction", 4-10.

war',[83] but also the extent to which social circumstances can elicit change in national popular memory.[84] Likewise, the emergence of new technologies and forms of communication can alter dominant memories of the past[85] and reveal personal experiences that were otherwise absent or marginalised like, for example, internet websites such as the BBC's 'People's War' page which has elicited the entry of new narratives of the past into the public sphere.[86]

Further still, political forces in the present - in seeking to provide articulations of the past which serve contemporary political ends - have affected how the Second World War has been remembered at various points since. Often the construction and revision of a 'people's war' narrative, in which the war effort was the result of, and attributed to, a newly engendered social and class unity, is credited with having helped to sustain subsequent political and economic arrangements within Britain domestically.[87] Historians have identified a revised narrative of British experience in World War Two that took shape in the 1980s, less involved with memory of the 'people's war' and focused primarily on a more direct celebration of military achievements of 'the few', an emphasis on 'standing alone' in 1940, and echoes of past imperial greatness.[88] Yet political re-appraisal like this does not equate to wholesale reconstruction. While emphasis can be placed on one conception over another, popular memories must maintain "some purchase

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[83] Brett Holman, "'Bomb Back, and Bomb Hard': Debating Reprisals during the Blitz", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*. 58, no. 3 (2012): 394-407.

[84] Frances Houghton, "Writing the 'Missing Chapter'", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War,* edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[85] Access to current affairs and news information through the internet has offered avenues for new research into the effects of memory, and the ways in which past events are explored as a frame for the present. For a consideration of this dynamic concerning air crashes, see: Ruth Garcia-Gavilanes, *et al.* "The memory remains: Understanding collective memory in the digital age", *Science Advances*. 3, no. 1 (2017): 1-7.

[86] Noakes, "'People's War' website".

[87] See, for example: Geoff Eley, "Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II", *American Historical Review*. 106, no. 3 (2001): 818-838; Penny Summerfield, "Dunkirk and the Popular Memory of Britain at War, 1940-1958", *Journal of Contemporary History*. 45, no. 4 (2014): 788-811.

[88] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 276-280; Noakes, *War and the British*, 105-106; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 126-129; Ibid., 152.

For a consideration of the place of the Falklands War within the broader context of 'Thatcherism', see: Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 134-153.

with people's personal memories".[89] Again, popular memories and narratives of Britain's role in military conflict should not be approached as political or elite constructs alone; space must be made for a consideration of the interpretations of the mass of ordinary British people who invoke and transmit them to subsequent generations.

Though subject to change, revision and reconstruction popular memory of Britain's Second World War has remained anchored in a public narrative of legitimacy and vindication. Mark Connelly has described the broad contours of this dominant account of Britain's World War Two experience:

In 1939 Britain falls into war unprepared and lacking a genuine leader. In 1940 Britain gained the leader it deserved in Winston Churchill, faced humiliating defeat in France but thanks to an extraordinary rallying of the nation an Armada of small boats crossed the channel to rescue the soldiers on the beaches of Dunkirk. Britain then stood alone, without allies, surrounded by the enemy. The Battle of Britain was won by the Few in the skies over the rolling countryside of southern England. Defeat in this battle forced the Germans into an indiscriminate bombing campaign. Far from causing the collapse of Britain, the people drew together in an even tighter bond and they embarked fully on their People's War. Surviving the Blitz did not bring about victory, however. Britain went on to suffer defeats in virtually every theatre of war until Montgomery came along and won a decisive victory in the desert. After that, with new allies, it was a glorious adventure. On D-Day 'Monty' led the way back to France, and the war culminated in the suicide of Hitler and the defeat of the Third Reich. In the Pacific the Americans dropped an atomic bomb, thus ending the war completely, although it has to be said that events in the Far East have not had a prominent profile in the British myth. In 1945 Britain deserved the applause of the world because it was the only nation to have been in from first to last. It had taken the formidable blows of the enemy unaided and won through.[90]

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[89] Noakes, *War and the British,* 25.
[90] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 1.

Britain's Second World War memory focused largely on Europe on the struggle against Nazi Germany, primarily concerned the population of the metropole at the expense of widespread recognition of the mobilisation of colonial troops,[91] and referred to a profoundly justified and just use of military force. Of course, as suggested above, memory of the war has been invoked in subsequent decades and recast in various political guises to suit the needs of the present, yet these competing conceptions have not diverged radically from broader popular memory of the war in which Britain was identified unambiguously as a force for good in the world, having opposed the 'evil' of the Nazis,[92] and 'stood alone' in 1940.[93] Certainly, the main constituent events of Britain's Second World War memory share in this celebrated quality and have been coloured by a belief in the unity of the nation in the face of aggression and, for a time, possible defeat.[94] Popular memory of the Second World War, in this sense, offers a clear and essentially consistent construction of a shared national past; an instance in which British identity was assured.

War memory must not however, be considered the product of world wars or consigned to events which occurred many decades ago. Recent 'small wars' remain

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[91] For a consideration of the relative place of empire within Britain's Second World War memory, see: Patrick Finney, "Isaac Fadoyebo's journey: remembering the British Empire's Second World War", in *Remembering the Second World War*, edited by Patrick Finney (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Martin Francis, "Remembering war, forgetting empire? Representations of the North Africa Campaign in 1950s British cinema", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 87-95; Wendy Ugolini, "Memory, ethnicity and the British Home Front", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
For a consideration of the impact of imperial forces within the war, and their place within the continuing legacy of the conflict, see: Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[92] The policy of appeasement, and its legitimacy and effectiveness, remains an important part of British popular memory of the Second World War. See: Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 191; Ibid., 217; Connelly, *We Can Take It!,* 269-271.

[93] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 280-294; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 7-9.

[94] Memory of the Blitz has been coloured heavily by a sense that the bombing suffered by Briton's engendered a form of national unity and galvanised the war effort at home in the face of destruction, see: Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*.
The Battle of Britain has also figured heavily in popular memory of the war, focused largely on the heroism of 'the Few', see: Martin Francis, *The Flyer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 52-69. For a consideration of the salience of memory of the retreat from Dunkirk, see also: Summerfield, "Dunkirk".

important objects of study because of the identities the nations involved invest in them.[95]

Likewise, the dynamics of memory operate from the occurrence of its constituent events.

As Alistair Thomson identifies, "public representations of the past – including the very

recent past that has only just been experienced – are thus used as an aid in the constant

process of making sense of personal experiences".[96] The memories and legacies of all

conflicts, of all scales, contribute to a common sense of the past and affect perceptions of

Britain's national identity and how individuals relate to it.

Indeed, historians and commentators have studied Britain's recent conflicts from a

memory perspective, most notably considering the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo wars.[97]

Generally however, such studies have approached contemporary cases from a focus on

commemoration or memory of the world wars rather than identifying Britain's recent

conflicts as a distinct era requiring singular attention. I focus in this thesis on Britain's

recent conflicts as objects of study in themselves. I consider their relationship with

interpretations of national identity and historical memory, and how their prosecution was

understood by British people. They are, from a material, social and political perspective,

important events in their own right.

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[95] Barkawi, "'Small Wars'", 129.
[96] Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 12.
[97] See the edited collection: James Aulich, *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992).
See also: Aulich, J. "Monuments and Memorials", in *The Gulf War Did Not* Happen, edited by Jeffrey Walsh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995); Connelly, *We Can Take It!*; Patrick Finney, "On Memory, Identity and War", *Rethinking History*. 6, no. 1 (2002): 1-13; Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity* (London: Pluto, 1999); Scot MacDonald, "Hitler's Shadow: Historical Analogies and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. 13, no. 4 (2002): 29-59; David Monaghan, *The Falklands War: Myth and Countermyth* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998); David Hoogland Noon, "Operation Enduring Analogy: World War II, the War on Terror and the used of Historical Memory", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. 7, no. 3 (2004): 339-364; Shaw, "Past wars"; Richard Shorten, "The Failure of Political Argument: The Languages of Anti-Fascism and Anti-Totalitarianism in Post-September 11th Discourse", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 11, no. 3 (2009): 479-503; Jeffrey Walsh, "Introduction: The Legacy of the Gulf War", in *The Gulf War Did Not Happen,* edited by Jeffrey Walsh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995); Jeffrey Walsh, "Remembering Desert Storm", in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Martin Evans and Kenneth Lunn (New York, N.Y.: Berg, 1997).

Britain's Recent Wars in Context

The 1982 Falklands War was interpreted by the government and much of the contemporary news media as both a military and political success. The defeat of the Argentine Junta was linked vociferously by the Prime Minster, Margaret Thatcher, to a history of British greatness focused on imperial prestige and the Second World War. This narrative formed part of a reinvigorated right-wing settlement for Britain[98] in which she explained that "Britain has re-kindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past and which today has begun to burn as brightly as before".[99] Representation of the conflict in the media, both the reporting of individual incidents, battles and events, and what it reflected about Britain's place in the world more broadly, were often positive and celebratory whilst conspicuously gendered and militaristic.[100]

Such ideas, linking contemporary conflict to an unbroken and celebrated British past, were of course contested both within governing or media elites and the wider public. The sinking of the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano*, on 2 May served as a point of focus for those in parliament and civil society who objected to the rush to war like, for example, the Labour Member of Parliament Tam Dalyell.[101] Indeed, the Sun newspaper's headline following the ship's sinking - "GOTCHA!"[102] – seemed to overstep the mark and is now largely remembered as an instance in which legitimate war reporting was

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[98] Noakes, *War and the British.*

[99] Margaret Thatcher's Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham, July 1983. Online, available at: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104989 (Accessed 31-08-2018).

[100] See: Noakes, *War and the British*.

[101] Dalyell's staunch criticism of the Thatcher government and the decision to sink the Belgrano are well-documented aspects of his political career. See, Brian Wilson, "Tam Dalyell obituary", *The Guardian*, 2017. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jan/26/tam-dalyell-obituary (Accessed 31-08-2018). His perspective – that the sinking of the ship was a deliberate effort to avoid a diplomatic settlement to the Falklands crisis – was outlined in a monograph written shortly after the war. See, Tam Dalyell, *Thatcher's Torpedo: Sinking of the Belgrano* (London: Cecil Woolf, 1983).

[102] *The Sun*, 04 May, 1982. The Sun's coverage of the war has become associated with the jingoistic tone of contemporary reporting. For example, see: Roy Greenslade, "A new Britain, a new kind of newspaper", *The Guardian*, 2002. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/feb/25/pressandpublishing.falklands (Accessed 04-09-2018).

abandoned in favour of insidious jingoism. However, even for those who objected to the war, the illegitimacy of Argentina's occupation of the Islands was rarely in doubt. The opposition leader Michael Foot – a politician whose left-wing background and academic predisposition made him an unlikely belligerent – supported a robust response to "an act of naked, unqualified aggression, carried out in the most shameful and disreputable of circumstances".[103] The war's detractors instead focused primarily on the apparent rush to use military force, and the Thatcher government's use of the conflict for its own political and domestic purposes. The conflict is now thought of primarily as a defence of an island people, a line that forms the basis of both official government policy[104] and the mediatised self-representation of the Islanders themselves.[105] It was a conflict based on legitimacy. It showed that British military force could be used because it was right rather than because it was necessary, and that it could be politically expedient. Thus it "provided a bridge from the Second World War to Britain's more recent military interventions."[106]

The Gulf War of 1990/1991 generated a different public discourse. The conflict was seen as an important event in Britain yet it was global in scope, not a solely British effort as the Falklands campaign had been. While memories of the Second World War and its constituent events framed representation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the popular press,[107] the war was also identified as an American one fought as the global Cold War came to an end.[108] The conflict was robustly supported by both the Thatcher and

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[103] United Kingdom, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* cc638. Series 6 Vol. 21, 1982.

[104] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "2010 to 2015 government policy: Falklands Islanders' right to self-determination", 2015. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-falkland-Islanders-right-to-self-determination/2010-to-2015-government-policy-falkland-Islanders-right-to-self-determination (Accessed 31-08-2018)

[105] Sarah Maltby, *Remembering the Falklands War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

[106] Helen Parr, *Our Boys: The Story of a Paratrooper* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 297.

[107] For examples and discussion of the manner in which the Second World War, and in particular narratives of appeasement, informed much of the immediate press coverage of the Gulf crisis, see: Noakes, "Gender and British National Identity", 192-212.

[108] The Guardian lead following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was illustrative, declaring, "Superpowers unite on Iraq", *The Guardian*, 03 August, 1990.

Major governments, and was broadly supported by the British public.[109] Critics of Operation Desert Storm (the codename for US-led operations in the Gulf) in the national and, by now, global news media saw the conflict as part of American *realpolitik* or an effort to enforce a new, post-Cold War imperialism. Christopher Hitchens' dissection of a war that was "yet another move in the policy of keeping a region divided and embittered, and therefore accessible to the franchisers of weaponry and the owners of black gold"[110] juxtaposed later support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq which he thought a more noble pursuit of expanding liberal freedoms.[111] Such an interpretation seems to mirror in the reverse popular consent for British involvement in the Gulf War and a far more critical public attitude toward Britain's part in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In fact, perhaps the most striking aspect of the Gulf War's subsequent commemoration is the extent to which British involvement is so little remembered. Unlike the previous Falklands conflict it did not form part of a broader discourse on the political direction of the state or society. Nor is it as frequently returned to within national media. British Gulf War veterans received a monument only as recently as 2016.[112] The conflict was thought to be an important event at the time, yet it was over rapidly and had resulted in minimal material impact for British or American forces.[113] From the point of view of the present, it can perhaps be compared to Britain's Korean War;[114] its most striking aspect is the extent to which the use of force on such a scale remains overlooked'.

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[109] An ICM poll which appeared in the *The Guardian*, February 1991, suggested that 80% of the British public believed that "military action was right" against Iraq.

[110] Christopher Hitchens, "Why We Are Stuck in the Sand: Relapolitik in the Gulf", *Harper's Magazine*, 1991. Online, available at: https://harpers.org/archive/1991/01/why-we-are-stuck-in-the-sand/7/ (Accessed 03-09-2018).

[111] Hitchens' support for the invasion of Iraq is documented in a volume of essays originally published in the magazine, *Slate*. See: Christopher Hitchens, *A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq* (New York: Plume, 2003).

[112] BBC News, "Memorial for Britons killed in first Gulf War is unveiled", 2016. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-35681158 (Accessed 24-01-2018).

[113] Matt Jones, "Ending Cold War fears: expectation and interpretation in Mass Observers' responses to the Gulf War, 1990–1991", *Contemporary British History*. 32, no. 2 (2018): 253-275.

[114] See: Huxford, "The Korean War".

As in Desert Storm, Britain's military contribution during the Balkan wars – in both Bosnia from 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 – was as part of a broader coalition and junior to that of the US. However, the British government assumed a more assertive role in pursuing an 'ethical foreign policy'[115] and took a more definitive lead in pursuing a muscular reaction to the unravelling of the former Yugoslavia. Tony Blair's speech, given in Chicago in April 1999 framed the Kosovo intervention as part of a broader struggle to define a humanitarian approach to world affairs and a commitment to a policy of active military intervention:

> This is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand. We must not rest until it is reversed... If we let an evil dictator range unchallenged, we will have to spill infinitely more blood and treasure to stop him later.[116]

The domestic representation of the Kosovo intervention was linked intrinsically to perceptions of the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the abuses and violence that occurred there. The Holocaust emerged within press and print media as a focal point for assessing the contemporary situation[117] as fleeing refugees became symbolic of the nature of the violence in the region.[118] However, public commemoration of Britain's involvement in Allied Force lacked the sense of grief, trauma or reverence associated with mass

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[115] Jamie Gaskarth, "Discourses and Ethics: The Social Construction of British Foreign Policy", *Foreign Policy Analysis.* 2, no. 4 (2006): 325-341; Gaskarth, "Interpreting Ethical Foreign Policy"; David McCourt, "Embracing Humanitarian Intervention".

[116] Tony Blair, "Doctrine of the International Community", April 1999, *National Archives*. Online, available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page1297 (Accessed 03-09-2018).

[117] Finney, "On Memory".

[118] See, for example: BBC News, "UK Kosovo refugees 'glad to be safe'", 1999. Online, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/327966.stm (Accessed 04-09-2018); The Independent, "Most Kosovo refugees opt to stay in UK", 1999. Online, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/most-kosovo-refugees-opt-to-stay-in-uk-1110699.html (Accessed 04-09-2018); David Bamber, "2000 refugees from Kosovo overstay their welcome in Britain", *The Telegraph*, 2000. Online, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/1372368/2000-refugees-from-Kosovo-overstay-their-welcome-in-Britain.html (Accessed 04-09-2018).

mobilisation and large numbers of British casualties. Fought at arm's length largely through airpower, the conflict is recalled as a test case for military intervention - lacking serious military risk for Western states - within a new constellation of humanitarian foreign policy aims. Most indicators of public opinion revealed a deployment that was less robustly supported by the wider public than had been the case in the previous Falklands and Gulf wars.[119] Certainly, the return of British forces did not engender any widespread celebration of British victory. The Balkan Wars, and Britain's part in them, were viewed in light of the grotesque violence which stirred an international response. It marked the beginning of Britain's era of humanitarian foreign policy in which moral arguments about actively and unilaterally intervening in the affairs of other states elicited fresh debate and contest within the public sphere.[120]

Domestic debate in Britain regarding the use of military force again shifted following the World Trade Center attacks in New York on 11 September 2001. President Bush's newly declared 'War on Terror' informed public discourse related to Britain's military deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, yet the specific circumstances of each affected the manner in which they were discussed and debated in Britain. The initial intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 occurred in the weeks following the September 11th attacks and was almost wholly an American-led operation. As such, in the first few years of the conflict the level of public and media scrutiny of events matched the low intensity

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[119] BBC News, "Britons 'support NATO strikes'", 28 March, 1999. Online, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/306010.stm (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[120] Discussion of Britain's Kosovo intervention within the popular press is laden heavily with humanitarian discourse, and serves often as a marker for assessing the merits of its practise more broadly. Allied Force thus appears frequently as a test-case for commentators discussing Britain's foreign policy turn in the later 1990s. For examples, see: Mary Dejevsky, "Kosovo Crisis: Clinton and Blair 'share the burden' of ending Kosovo's agony", *The Independent*. 24 March, 1999. Online, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/kosovo-crisis-clinton-and-blair-share-the-burden-of-ending-kosovos-agony-1082593.html (Accessed 04-09-2018); The Independent, "Leading article: Kosovo: a triumph for intervention", 17 February, 2008. Online, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/leading-article-kosovo-a-triumph-for-intervention-783279.html (Accessed 04-09-2018); Neil Clark, "Kosovo and the myth of liberal intervention", *The Guardian*. 15 December, 2010. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/15/balkans-report-blairs-liberal-intervention (Accessed 04-09-2018).

of military operations. Responding to the challenge posed by a resurgent Taliban, the British redeployment to Helmand province in 2006 meant both the numbers of British soldiers deployed increased alongside the levels of violence and casualties suffered. The Afghan occupation was scrutinised in greater detail within the press and media as the numbers of military and civilian deaths rose,[121] and in subsequent years became a byword for drawn-out and lengthy occupation, lacking clear military or political goals.[122] The summary of the immediate post-Helmand phase of the conflict posted on the Imperial War Museum's website indicates the extent to which concern and confusion were at the heart of the war's public representation:

> In Britain, media coverage – especially of repatriation ceremonies – helped to bring greater public awareness of the conflict. There was a growing unease about the original aims of military intervention and its likelihood of bringing peace. At the same time, there was a visible groundswell of support for troops fighting in Afghanistan. New service charities – the most high profile of which was Help for Heroes – successfully campaigned to raise money for the war's young veterans.[123]

By July 2009, according to a Comres poll, just 35% of respondents believed the Afghanistan War was winnable while 31% believed Britain should devote more troops

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[121] See: Mark Townsend, "Civilian death toll rised in the bloody battle of Helmand", *The Guardian*, 2007. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/aug/12/world.afghanistan (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[122] For a retrospective critique of Britain's war in Afghanistan, see: Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failures in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2011). Ledwidge's book received much attention in the popular press, indicative of a broader critical dissent from the campaign. See: Richard Norton-Taylor, "Afghanistan war has cost Britain more than £37bn, new book claims", *The Guardian*, 2013. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/30/afghanistan-war-cost-britain-37bn-book (Accessed 04-09-2018); Alice Philipson, "Afghanistan war has cost every British household more than £2,000, new book claims", *The Telegraph*, 2013. Online, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/10088230/Afghanistan-war-has-cost-every-British-household-more-than-2000-new-book-claims.html (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[123] Amanda Mason, "What was the British role in Afghanistan", *Imperial War Museum*, 2018. Online, available at: https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-british-role-in-afghanistan (Accessed 04-09-2018).

and resources.[124] The war's representation in popular culture perhaps reflected the prevailing public mood. For example, the British film, *Kajaki*, was released to broad critical acclaim immediately after the end of British combat operations in 2014.[125] Based on actual events, it tells the story of a group of British paratroopers who inadvertently move into a Soviet-era minefield while patrolling the surrounds of the Kajaki dam in northern Helmand Province. The plot seems to capture neatly the interpretation of the conflict by a disillusioned public; the soldiers are portrayed as brave, decent, even heroic, yet they are trapped by circumstance and are, almost from the beginning of the film, desperate simply to escape. The vast majority of the film's duration is shot in a single location with the protagonists brutally injured and unable to move. Taliban insurgents or enemy combatants are almost entirely absent. The greatest hurdle facing the soldiers - like Britain itself - is how to extricate themselves from the increasingly desperate situation into which they have stumbled.

The popular interpretation of Britain's war in Afghanistan cannot be understood however, without an assessment of the public reaction to the war in Iraq from 2003. Britain's contribution to a largely American invasion was, from its inception, controversial and contested.[126] The Blair government's effort to temper American unilateralism and seek a broader, international consensus[127] was complicated by a parallel attempt to secure domestic support by stressing the threat posed by the Iraqi regime.[128] Within parliament, the media and among the wider public, the government's official case for war, based largely on the suspected Iraqi weapons programme, was never widely

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[124] Comres Poll, in *The Independent,* 14-16 July, 2009.

[125] *Kajaki* (2014), directed by Paul Katis [DVD]. Produced by Paul Katis and Andrew de Lotbiniere. London: Pukka Films.

[126] Ipsos Mori and YouGov tracked public support for the Iraq War through survey questionnaires and polling. In only one instance in May 2003 did more than half of respondents express support for the invasion. From 2002 to 2007 supported remained between 25% and 40% in the vast majority of their quarterly polls.

[127] Dodge, "Intervention"; Kennedy-Pipe and Vickers, "'Blowback' for Britain"; Ralph, "After Chilcot".

[128] See: Strong, "More Spinn'd", 110-147.

accepted.[129] In the House of Commons the government relied on the support of the Conservative opposition to initiate the use of force and suffered resignations by prominent members of the cabinet, most notably Clare Short and Robin Cook.[130] Public protest against the war reached a level unique among the cases I consider.[131] While much of the national press supported or acquiesced to the government's position during the initial crisis and invasion, public hostility and a worsening political and military situation in Iraq transformed editorial responses and journalistic comment. The Blair government became an object of hostility, blamed for a colossal foreign policy mistake.[132] The conflict is remembered as having generated extraordinarily well-attended street protests and having set the broader public against the government, though of course the narrative that the whole population were unanimously against the use of force is difficult to sustain when considering contemporaneous polling.

The conflict's public legacy in Britain is now one based largely on its lack of legitimacy; that the government had been wrong to use military force in Iraq. Subsequent media analyses and editorials have focused on the incorrect assumption that the Hussein regime possessed a threatening stockpile of weapons, a narrative that was given new life in July 2016 after the publishing of the long-awaited Iraq Inquiry.[133] Its findings were not favourable for the Blair government and seemed to vindicate those who remembered a

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[129] Ibid.

[130] See: The Guardian, "Clare Short's resignation letter", 2003. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/12/labour.voluntarysector (Accessed 04-09-2018); Matthew Tempest, "Cook resigns from cabinet over Iraq", *The Guardian*, 2003. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/mar/17/labour.uk (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[131] BBC News, "'Million' march against Iraq War", 2003. Online, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2765041.stm (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[132] For a summary, see: John Jewell, "Tony Blair took Britain to war in 2003 – but most of Fleet Street marched with him", *The Conversation*, 2016. Online, available at: https://theconversation.com/tony-blair-took-britain-to-war-in-2003-but-most-of-fleet-street-marched-with-him-62065 (Accessed 04-09-2018). See also: Roy Greenslade, "UK national newspapers reject Tony Blair's Iraq war 'apology'", *The Guardian*, 2015. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2015/oct/26/uk-national-newspapers-reject-tony-blairs-iraq-war-apology (Accessed 04-09-2018).

[133] See, for example: The Guardian, "Chilcot report: key points from the Iraq inquiry", 2016. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/06/iraq-inquiry-key-points-from-the-chilcot-report (Accessed 04-09-2018).

conflict pursued without public or popular support. Indeed, efforts by subsequent governments to use military force elsewhere, most notably in Syria in 2013, have come unstuck because of fears that Britain may find itself in another unpopular war. The Cameron government's defeat in parliament was, on the BBC's Newsnight programme broadcast on same day, blamed squarely on 'the shadow of Iraq'.[134] While British forces have been redeployed to the Middle East following the Iraq War, they are there in much smaller numbers and without 'boots on the ground'.[135] Such a campaign is assumed within the political elite in Westminster and much of the media establishment in Britain to be politically unpalatable, primarily because of the public memory of the Iraq invasion and its aftermath. The orthodox view of the conflict seems now to be what Alex Danchev has described as "Tony Blair's Vietnam"; a political failure linked to personal disgrace and ruination.[136]

The memory context of Britain's recent wars – their public interpretation and representation – varies across cases. It would of course, require another thesis to adequately explore their cultural impact in Britain using the press, parliamentary and literary resources considered above, thus I have not done so in any greater detail throughout subsequent chapters. My aim is instead to explore individual narratives within this broader context in order to understand how people make sense of war, and how they are linked to broader concepts of national identity and memory. While individual discussions and written texts are not produced in a vacuum, my thesis is an effort to consider the voices of individual British people during a period of frequent military

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[134] BBC Newsnight, 30 August, 2013. First broadcast on BBC 2, 22:30 Friday 30 August, 2013.
[135] At the time of writing British forces are involved as part of a global coalition supporting Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Security Forces in fighting ISIL in Iraq. Likewise, nearly 1000 UK troops have been redeployed to Afghanistan helping to train and support the Afghan National Army. While the Royal Air Force has contributed military strikes in all these countries since 2015, British ground forces are not deployed in combat roles.
[136] Danchev, "Tony Blair's Vietnam".

conflict for Britain, and to explore what this shows about how those people relate the use of force to Britain, its history and, as such, its identity.

Using archival data produced by the Mass Observation Project (MOP) – which I consider in detail shortly – I seek to demonstrate how these recent conflicts were interpreted by 'ordinary' British people, how they were believed to have affected Britain's identity and place in the world, and how they were understood through recollection and invocation of the further past. As explained above, collective and popular interpretation of events occurs alongside personal experience and reflection as conflicts unfold.[137] Mass Observation Project responses – taken from directives issued during and immediately after recent conflicts[138] – show how the dynamics of popular memory are at work within individual interpretations of contemporary events from the beginning, and are contested and reformed subsequently. This approach, in which the period of British conflict between 1982 and 2014 is considered as a distinct era in the generation of war memory, offers an original and unique contribution to knowledge in the field.

Methodology and Mass Observation

There are of course, a number of methodological approaches appropriate for exploring popular memories and available sources of evidence are similarly as varied.[139] For example, film and literature offer ways for historians to consider how their subject matter is interpreted and viewed in the public sphere. Memories of war are revealed by their

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[137] Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11-15.
[138] See Appendix II for details and dates of issue. How I have approached and used Mass Observation Project material is the subject of the proceeding sections of this introduction.
[139] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 8-17.

shifting portrayal in high-profile films, television programmes, art, photography and novels.[140]

While consideration of cultural artefacts like these reveals how recent conflicts have been represented and understood in the public sphere,[141] such an approach risks failing to adequately account for the ability of individuals to construct their own narratives,[142] something that is an increasingly important focus for research related to foreign policy, war, memory and public opinion.[143] Broad shifts in public and popular reception of past conflicts can be ascertained by considering popular culture and artefacts that circulate within mass society, yet this must also be complemented by individual-level analysis in order to see the specific ways in which British people make sense of the use of military force in both the recent and further past.

I draw on Mass Observation Project (MOP) data within this thesis in order to uncover individual interpretations of Britain's recent conflicts. MOP responses offer a way of showing not only what individual British people thought about the nation's involvement in conflicts since 1982, but also offer a way of exploring in detail *how* such opinions are formed, and *why* these individuals arrive at the conclusions they do. MOP responses allow for the exploration of subjective and abstract constructions of British identity. They reveal - within the written accounts of individual British people - the ways in which memory functions to create shared narratives of British experience in war, connecting present to past through a collective belief in a common history. Indeed, other scholars have drawn on the data held by the archive to furnish similar insights. For

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[140] See, for example: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*; Eley, "Finding the People's War"; Paris, *Warrior Nation*.
[141] See, for example, the edited collection: Aulich, *Framing the Falklands*.
See also: Aulich, "Monuments and Memorials"; Monaghan, *The Falklands War*.
[142] Defined here as "a temporally, spatially and causally connected sequence of events, selected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience", narrative involves the construction of meaning rather than simply description. See: Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (London: Sage, 2008), 3. See also: Berenskoetter, "National biography".
[143] Tom Colley, "Is Britain a Force for Good? Investigating British Citizen's Narrative Understanding of War", *Defence Studies*. 17, no. 1 (2017): 1-22; A. Cooper Drury, A. C. *et al*. "The American Public's for Military Action", *Political Research Quarterly*. 63, no. 1 (2010): 83-96.

example, Lucy Noakes has outlined how Mass Observation material can be used as a source of individual writing in which popular memories of the Second World War were crucial in framing and gendering what observers wrote about more contemporary conflicts.[144] However, MOP data has not been used systematically in a study focused on Britain's recent conflicts from 1982, or at least, not in a study in which that era of contemporary overseas military conflict is considered the primary object of study.

It is worth at this point discussing the origins and development of Mass Observation itself in order to better understand the nature of the source material used in this research. Indeed, Mass Observation began as a prototypical exercise in social history founded in 1937 by two left-wing intellectuals, Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, aimed at documenting and exploring the lives of working class people in Britain.[145] Though Mass Observation was affected heavily by the conditions of the Second World War, and used frequently as a test for British morale by wartime authorities, it offered a way for individuals to give their own narratives and interpretations of particular events in their lives.[146] Naturally, Mass Observation data has been used not only as a source for social histories of the Second World War,[147] but as a place where individual experiences can be considered in light of popular memories and myths of the past. Detailed consideration of the archive's data formed part of Angus Calder's exploration of Britain's Blitz myth,

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[144] Noakes, *War and the British*, 75-85; Noakes, "Gender and British National Identity", 110-124.

[145] See, among other works: Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, *Britain by Mass Observation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939). For an historical overview of Mass Observation and its genesis within left-wing politics of the late 1930s and 1940s, see: Alexandre Campsie, "Mass-Observation, Left Intellectuals and the Politics of Everyday Life", *The English Historical Review*. 131, no. 548 (2016): 92-121.

[146] For a discussion of the archive, its history and contributors, see: Emma Casey, Fiona Courage, and Nick Hubble, "Mass Observation as Method", *Sociological Research Online*. 19, no. 3 (2014). Online, available at: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/19/3/22.html (Accessed 26-05-2017); James Hinton, *The Mass Observers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nick Hubble, *Mass Observation and Everyday Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Annabella Pollen, "Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present: 'Scientifically, about as valuable as a chimpanzee's tea party at the zoo'?", *History Workshop*. 75, no. 1 (2013): 213-235; Dorothy Sheridan, "Reviewing Mass-Observation: The Archive and its Researchers Thirty Years on", *Qualitative Social Research Forum*. 1, no. 3 (2000). Online, available at: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/1043/2255 (Accessed 26-06-2017).

[147] For a recent example, see: Todman, *Britain's War*.

revealing the extent to which individual experience was constitutive of, but often incongruent with, the shared narratives of determination, resilience and unity that prevailed at the time and since.[148]

The focus of this thesis is on Britain's recent wars within the period between 1982 and 2014, and as such I have drawn on more contemporary data. Having largely ceased as an academic exercise by the 1960s, Mass Observation was revived in 1981 – rebranded the Mass Observation Project - and although its focus and methods have become more uniform and academic in nature, recording 'everyday life in Britain'[149] remains the guiding principle. The Project's coordinators continue to provide a panel of around five hundred[150] ever-changing 'observers' with quarterly 'directives'. They are asked to submit 'responses' to (normally) three or four questions or topics within each directive. The topics selected are largely random and are intended to cover as much of social life as possible. 'Birthdays', 'the Royal Wedding' and 'Celebrity Big Brother' are intermingled with 'Morality and Religion' and 'Death and Bereavement'. Thus, the scope is broad and the MOP legitimately claims the mantle of "one of the major repositories of longitudinal qualitative social data in the UK."[151]

The individual, detailed and qualitative source data the MOP has produced has informed much recent work in social history related to, for example, gender politics in the

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[148] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*. For more recent research in which Mass Observation has been used in this manner, see: Loukianos Hassiotis, "British Public Opinion and Military Intervention in Greece, December 1944-January 1945: Stories from Mass-Observation", *Journal of Contemporary History*. 50, no. 2 (2014): 296-317; Jonathan Moss, *et al*. "Golden Age, Apathy or Stealth? Democratic Engagement in Britain, 1945-1950", *Contemporary British History*. 30, no. 4 (2016): 441-462; Lucy Noakes, "'Serve to Save': Gender, Citizenship and Civil Defence in Britain 1937-41", *Journal of Contemporary History*. 47, no. 4 (2012): 734-753; Lucy Noakes, "A Broken Silence? Mass Observation, Armistice Day and 'everyday life' in Britain 1937-1941", *Journal of European Studies*. 45, no. 4 (2015): 331-346.

[149] For an overview of the project and its remit see the MOP's website, available at: http://www.massobs.org.uk/about/mass-observation-project

[150] Since 1981, over 4000 individuals have contributed as observers to the Project. As observers drop out and end their contributions they are gradually replaced by new volunteers.

[151] This is stated on the MOP's website: http://www.massobs.org.uk/about/mass-observation-project

home,[152] perceptions and practice of ethical consumption,[153] changing discourses of class since the 1980s,[154] and shifting memories of gender since the 1960s.[155] Like Mass Observation before it, MOP data is a valuable source of social history in which individual interpretations can be considered within the context of broader social and popular history.

The MOP Sample and Method

I have considered the responses of 208 individual observers throughout this research. This sample was derived from a larger reading of 280 individual sets of responses, submitted to eleven individual directives.[156] The sixty-two individuals whose responses I have not considered in this thesis were omitted because they did not mention any of the cases directly,[157] they only transcribed Press reports or TV or Radio broadcasts,[158] or what they wrote was illegible. I have not stratified this random sample by any other variable, thus they remain representative of the contributors to the Mass Observation Project only. I have for contextual purposes retained biographical information including age, location, employment background and living arrangements – all of which is kept, anonymously, by the Mass Observation Project.

The effect of this exclusion criteria is to create a sample of concerned or aware observers who paid relatively close attention to Britain's involvement in its recent

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[152] Claire Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain", *Journal of Contemporary History*. 40, no. 2 (2005): 341-362.

[153] Matthew Adams and Jayne Raisborough, "Making a Difference: Ethical Consumption and the Everyday", *British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 2 (2010): 256-274.

[154] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "Archive Review: 'Observing the 80s'", *Twentieth Century British History*. 25, no. 3 (2014): 484-495. For a discussion of MOP's 'Observing the 80s' website, see: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "Archive Review: 'Observing the 80s'", *Twentieth Century British History*. 25, no. 3 (2014): 484-495.

[155] Helena Mills, "Using the Personal to Critique the Popular: Women's Memories of 1960s Youth", *Contemporary British History*. 30, no. 4 (2016): 463-483.

[156] See Appendix II for copies of all directive sheets from which observers responses are drawn.

[157] This was the case among later directives in which observers more frequently chose to focus on other subjects and not consider directly the content of war-related sub-directives.

[158] Narrative involves the construction of meaning and should not be reduced simply to the recording of 'discourse' which can include simply description. See: Riessman, *Narrative Methods*, 3.

conflicts, and who felt motivated to record (to varying degrees and in various levels of detail) their thoughts and feelings on the subject. They cannot be considered statistically representative of the British population, as is the case in polling or survey data. However, categorising their responses in this manner - based on quantitative analysis alone - does not make sufficient use of the content of what they write:

> The dominant meaning of 'representativeness' to which critics allude, or take for granted, privileges the individual, the single voice, and it is based on the assumption that people can only be seen to represent themselves. In this case, the quality of representativeness lies not in what they say, but in who they are (as defined by selected socio-economic characteristics which permit large scale generalizations about the whole population).[159]

Thus what observers discuss cannot be approached as a sample of broader 'opinion', yet their private accounts are not written in a social vacuum. While polling and survey data reveal broad and generalizable results, Mass Observation responses reveal the ideas, narratives and nuances which are drawn from and constitute public opinion, insofar as it can be said to exist as an entity at all.[160] I am interested here not so much in how observers' responses can be connected to broader society, but in how observers themselves connect various ideas to contemporary events, and contemporary events to broader narratives of the national past.

MOP responses are also largely voluntary and their content is determined primarily by observers themselves as they are asked to respond only to basic prompts. Their written accounts are not the result of structured questioning and they are given the freedom (and are encouraged) to write about what they desire or think relevant. Thus the

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[159] Sheridan, "Reviewing Mass-Observation", 18.
[160] Christopher Hill, "Public Opinion and British Foreign Policy Since 1945: Research in Progress?", *Millennium.* 10, no. 1 (1981): 53-62.

content of what they write marks observers' responses out as a source of unique and reflexive "emotional richness".[161] Observers are subjects of research in the sense that what they write is used as a form of evidence for, in this case, interpretations of British military force since 1982, yet they also produce their own narratives which are necessarily selective and, importantly, written for somebody, at some point, to read. Anne Marie Kramer has described this as a form of 'dual vision' in which observers are aware both that they are the objects of social research, but that they are carrying it out themselves too.[162] Thus it is important to bear in mind that observers have thought about what they write, and are attempting to present their accounts of Britain's involvement in military conflicts as personal, genuine, informed or authoritative. The presentation of their narratives is surely impacted by the reality that they are 'the observed'.[163] However this dynamic produces the sort of reflexive, thoughtful and detailed narratives that this study aims to uncover and, though observers are aware that their responses may be read, they are anonymous. Britain's involvement in recent conflicts, and what they have meant for its identity and history – both of which necessarily require construction and narrativisation - are subjects which are illuminated by the use of such individual written observers' accounts. Indeed, for Martin Shaw, this richness is a distinct advantage over quantitative social research:

> Standard questionnaires and surveys do not allow access to multiple meanings and contradiction. They are designed to eliminate them. However, contradiction is central to social life and ways of

[161]Jenny Shaw, "Transference and Countertransference in the Mass-Observation Archive: and Under-Exploited Research Resource", *Human Relations*. 47, no. 11 (1994): 1392-1408, 1393.

[162] Anne-Marie Kramer, "The Observers and the Observed: The 'Dual Vision' of the Mass Observation Project", *Sociological Research Online*. 19, no. 4 (2014): 1-11.

[163] Ibid.

researching it need to be found. The fluid, complex and interconnected MO data, on almost a random number of themes, is one such.[164]

Observers' responses to Britain's recent conflicts elucidate individual perspectives and views that are simply too complex, nuanced and subjective to be adequately catalogued by purely quantitative methods. Indeed, in avoiding the sort of preceding structuration and prompting that forms the basis of survey analysis or structured interviews, the researcher is able to uncover results that may not be anticipated at all.

Observers are of course, a particular group of people who self-select and are actively motivated to write for the archive. Yet the 'volunteered' nature of their responses is a unique strength in delivering the voices of concerned individuals and people who feel that the perspectives of 'ordinary' people should be recorded:

> The desire to write for MO has been described as 'an autobiographical impulse', but the archival nature of the project clearly also attracts those with a historical consciousness. Correspondents give generously of their thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions in part because they enjoy the process as self-developmental or even therapeutic, but also, at times, as a kind of social altruism, as an oppositional 'ordinary' voice against 'official' culture.[165]

Certainly, the concept of 'ordinary' is not an objective marker of identity. As Matthew Hilton has shown, politics has become an increasingly important part of the lives of ordinary British people – those not involved in policy, decision-making or political leadership – just as the 'ordinary' has increasingly become part of political history.[166] Observers are concerned with recording and relating to historical events – including

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[164] Martin Shaw, *Civil Society and media in Global Crises* (London: Pinter, 1996), 12.
[165] Pollen, "Research Methodology", 8.
[166] Matthew Hilton, "Politics is Ordinary: Non-governmental Organizations and Political Participation in Contemporary Britain", *Twentieth Century British History*. 22, no. 2 (2011): 230-268.

military conflicts – that do not physically involve them, yet they often identify themselves as ordinary in opposition to what they perceive to be the 'high politics' of an elite or establishment,[167] and offer testimony that is drawn from private and familial experiences.[168] I consider observers' accounts to be the product of a group of people who do not have particular historical expertise or political responsibilities in Britain's use of military force in the contemporary period, but for whom memory of the past and constructions of national identity are important nevertheless in making sense of those contemporary circumstances. They offer a source of 'ordinary' opinion which is both a product of, and contributing to, popular and public constructions of identity and memory.

At this point it should be explained how Mass Observation Project responses have been approached and introduced within this research. Given the detailed and complex nature of the source material, the abstract nature of the objects of study, and the qualitative approach I seek to apply in researching them, I have presented a broad and inclusive reading of observers' texts aimed at letting observers speak for themselves.[169] I have not applied quantitative coding, categorisation or reductive analysis.[170] Instead I have quoted at length (where required) from observers in order to demonstrate the specific and often complex ideas they convey within responses. Naturally I have not been able to quote all observers and so have deployed typical quotes which are representative

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[167] Dorothy Sheridan, Brian Street and David Bloome, *Writing Ourselves: Mass-Observation and Literary Practices* (New York: Hampton Press, 2000), 281-292.

[168] Lucy Noakes, "'My Husband is Interested in War Generally': gender, family history and the emotional legacies of total war", *Women's History Review*. Online, available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1292634 (accessed 24-01-2018).

[169] For an in-depth overview and discussion of the ways in which interpretative 'thick description' is required in social research in order to uncover multi-layered and subjective meaning, see: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (2nd ed. London: Fontana, 1993), 3-30.

[170] The application of such methods is made particularly difficult by the great variation in observers' written accounts and, I suggest, unduly dismisses the contradiction and variation of their responses in order to provide more comparative results, of debatable utility. I remain interested only in observers discourse and how this reflects their attitudes toward Britain, its recent wars, identity and history. I have not gone into detail regarding the linguistic construction of their accounts, though attitudes, subject and meaning are considered relative throughout. For a more detailed consideration, see: Stephen Gibson, "'I'm not a war monger but…': Discourse Analysis and Social Psychological Peace Research", *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. 22, no. 2 (2011): 159-173.

of sentiments articulated in other observers' responses. I have also attempted to convey the ideas which appeared most important to observers, providing an interpretation of their discourse and capturing the variation, nuance and subtly of their individual accounts while assessing their collected contributions as a whole. Though it is clear that individual observers are able to construct their own unique narratives, it is also apparent that many ideas are shared or contested, revealing the extent to which public and popular interpretation affect what they write.

A final advantage of using Mass Observation Project responses which must be noted is the longitudinal quality of the data. I have considered responses submitted to various directives concerning the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars, and though few observers consistently wrote about Britain's involvement in recent conflicts across this period,[171] it is possible here to compare and contrast a single form of data over time and compare cases. Further, though I have not stratified the sample by age, it is also possible to see the extent to which 'generation' marks observers' written accounts. Mass Observation offers an opportunity to explore how individuals construct their own identities in relation to important events in the past, and how they situate individual narratives within a changing contemporary social and political context. The content of observers' responses is not produced in isolation. They connect contemporary events to the more recent past as a frame and explanation for the present, and to the more distant past as part of broader narratives of British history and identity. Such findings are made available on an individual scale by use of the Mass Observation Project's data and satisfy a requirement of this research that Britain's involvement in the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars be considered as a distinct set of events.

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[171] Of the 208 individual observers whose responses I consider within this research, thirty-five submitted responses to more than one directive.

I have relied exclusively on the Mass Observation Project as the primary source material for this research. As a consequence the project is necessarily affected by the limitations inherent in the use of Mass Observation Project data itself. As I have demonstrated throughout, my results and findings are not generalizable or representative and are based on a comparatively small group of self-selecting individuals. However, I have used this single source of evidence because the findings produced in the consequent research outweigh the limitations. What follows is a detailed and qualitative analysis of individual representations of Britain's recent conflicts which can only be achieved by analysis of a volunteered, largely unstructured source of primary data. Similarly, the panel of observers contacted by the MOP offer a much broader range and greater number of individuals than would have been available had I attempted to organise focus groups or interviews and in addition allow longitudinal comparison which would not be possible otherwise. Thus the quantity of data I draw on here is large enough to warrant the omission of other sources of evidence that would not necessarily advance an understanding of the objects of research – abstract concepts of nation, memory and history – and would reduce the space available for a more rigorous dissection of MOP data.

I have focused solely on Mass Observation material because it offers a detailed, volunteered source of subjective written text, produced by 'ordinary' individual members of the British public. And because it represents a bank of individuals large enough to identify distinct patterns and themes relevant to the broader research aims of this PhD thesis. This is of course not to say that structured, quantitative analysis, surveys or polling do not offer valid results – they do – but that the aims of this research are more narrow, abstract and based on the individual, micro level. This thesis offers findings which do not contradict much of the public opinion research undertaken in relation to Britain's recent

foreign policy, or indeed historical studies of memory focused on popular culture, but instead offers an account which is intended to compliment such work by focusing on a different form of data, the strengths of which outnumber its weaknesses within the context in which it is deployed.

The MOP Sample and Demographic Details

The sample of 208 individual observers I consider here responded to various directives issued between 1982 and 2014. Accordingly, it is important to note that this range of multiple directives varied in terms of what they asked observers to write about, what they asked observers to do,[172] and where in the hierarchy of MOP responses they were issued.[173] The Falklands, Gulf and Iraq wars were accorded dedicated directives which asked observers to record responses to those conflicts, and keep a "diary" of reactions thereafter. In 1999 the Kosovo War was accorded a sub-directive which meant observers were asked for their views on the current crisis and were not asked to keep a diary.[174] I have also used responses to directives which asked observers to write about "issues in the news" or "the world situation" in 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2014. These latter directives were not aimed specifically at recording observers' reactions to military conflicts occurring at the time, but they generally included a short prompt to which some observers responded. The content of their responses was collectively similar to that which emerged in the dedicated directives, though often in conjunction with broader global issues.

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[172] In some cases as in the Falklands, Gulf and Iraq dedicated directives observers were asked to keep a 'diary' or reactions to the war as it unfolded, a request which was taken seriously by few observers.

[173] Directives contain within them 'sub-directives' which relate to one of the three or four themes which observers are asked to write about.

[174] Though the tardiness of some observers means that the directive contains responses written before, during and after Operation Allied Force between March and June 1999.

The 2008 directive which asked for observers' "War experiences and reflections" is perhaps the most obviously dissimilar to both the dedicated war directives and the current affairs sub-directives. Issued after all the cases I consider – including the redeployment to Helmand Province in 2006 – it prompted observers to write about war over a longer time period and represented an opportunity to invoke personal and popular memories of the more distant past. Though observers did relate to contemporary circumstance here, the responses I have drawn on that were submitted to the 2008 directive show the importance and relevance of popular war memories in fashioning narratives of British identity. It is important to note that in asking for 'reflections' on the theme of war itself, such responses were prompted differently and offer a subset of individuals who were less focused on any one specific military action.[175] I have however, compared observers' responses to all directives as a single source of evidence. The varied ways in which they are prompted is another reason why they are not directly comparable quantitatively. However, I suggest that this variation permits access to a broader and richer discourse than would be the case if I had confined this research to a discussion of observers responses to, for example, the dedicated directives only.

The number of individual sets of observers' responses I have included, related to each conflict, is as follows:

- Falklands War: thirty-five observers' responses

- Gulf War: forty-two observers' responses

- Kosovo War: forty-eight observers' responses

- Afghanistan War: fifty-five observers' responses

- Iraq War: 102 observers' responses

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[175] Though as I discuss in later chapters, reflection on the world wars was accompanied by discussion of all the cases I consider in this research at some point by observers writing responses in 2008.

As I show, the number of observers whose responses I have considered steadily rises in relation to each case.[176] There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the structure of directives reflects the context of Britain's wars. There are single directives related to the short conflicts in the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo, and multiple directives related to lengthy occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus I have attempted to gain a sufficient amount of responses from these multiple directives in order to cover the occupation periods of the latter. This has resulted in a greater number of responses related to the lengthier wars in Afghanistan and Iraq when compared to those previous. Secondly, the greater number of observers' responses considered in later conflicts is also a result specifically of their content. What observers wrote about later conflicts became increasingly complex, confused and ambiguous and thus demanded a greater effort to reach saturation by considering a greater number of perspectives.[177] I considered a smaller number of responses in relation to earlier conflicts as it became apparent that there was less *variation* in what observers wrote about them, and fewer anomalous submissions comparatively. Observers writing in 1982 were, I suggest, more clear and certain about what they thought about that conflict than, for example, those who wrote about the Kosovo War in 1999. This represents a finding in itself and is an important part of my overall analysis. I discuss it in greater detail as I move into discussion of each of the cases.

I have not systematically considered observers' written accounts in relation to variables like gender, age or social background, yet some consideration of the demographic structure of the sample should be given. Perhaps most importantly, I emphasise that few observers I consider in this sample wrote in response to more than one

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[176] The total of those considered in each chapter (242) exceeds the total number of observers considered in this research (208) because some observers contributed to multiple directives which concerned different conflicts, thus they are counted twice here.

[177] For a consideration of the importance of saturation in the structuring of samples and qualitative research, see: Colley, "Is Britain a force for good?", 6; Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London: Sage, 2003), 77-108.

or two directives. Thus I neither seek nor am able to consider how individual observers' perspectives on different conflicts vary or how their writings change through their life courses. I am interested in this research to ascertain the ways in which different cohorts of observers have written about various recent conflicts, and then compare the ideas and narratives which were articulated by these different cohorts.

The effect of this structure is a broad consistency in the age range of observers writing at any one time.[178] Thus I approach responses written by people who are generally middle-aged or elderly, but for whom generation is marked out by important events in their lives, or in the era in which they grew up. Often this was personal experience of the events of the Second World War or its immediate cultural aftermath.[179] I explore what observers wrote about Britain's recent conflicts and how they were related to broader interpretations of British identity and history, whilst also reflecting on how changes and continuities within observers' written responses can be seen over time, and as observers cease writing and individuals born later begin to submit responses in their place.

Furthermore, it should be noted that I have included responses from more women than men. Of the 208 observers considered, 130 (63%) were women. Though this means that the sample is not representative of wider society, I refer again to the fact that I do not intend this research to be so. Neither do I seek to consider observers' responses in relation to their gender. While the sample is not statistically representative, I have included both

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[178] The average age of those who submitted responses to the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo directives was 50, 53 and 61 respectively. Establishing the average age of those writing about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is more difficult as those responses are spread over multiple directives and several years. However the average age of those who submitted responses concerned with Afghanistan was 59 in 2001. The average age of those who submitted responses concerned with Iraq was 58 in 2003. As older observers were replaced continually by younger observers this average would not have radically shifted in subsequent years.

[179] This supports findings made elsewhere regarding the importance of memory and involvement in wartime as a marker for constructions of generation. See in the British case: Penny Summerfield, "The generation of memory: Gender and the popular memory of the Second World War in Britain", in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, edited by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattison (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

For an example of the contemporary mobilisation of Second World War 'generation' discourse in the United States, see: Noon, "Operation Enduring Analogy".

male and female voices. Similarly, the sample contains observers from various backgrounds and from many regions, yet the skew toward the middle-aged and elderly means that young full-time workers are not well represented. Again, I approach observers written accounts in order to evaluate what they say about Britain's recent conflicts and how they articulate it, not whether their educational, employment or social background affects this, though of course such a study offers a possible avenue for future research.

Themes

In order to retain the volunteered and complex character of observers' writings I have not rigorously categorised or coded responses. Yet some interpretation of what is a large and disparate collection of written text is required. Despite variation in tone, structure and content, it is apparent that observers collectively focused on a number of key themes in which connections between Britain, its identity, its role in modern conflicts, and its national past were made. The themes that emerged most frequently – offering the most utility for exploring connections between war and national identity – were: the legitimacy of Britain's recent conflicts; its military institutions and combat; leadership and domestic politics; and perceptions of the institutions, nations and Others with whom Britain came into contact. These themes are also salient aspects of studies of British war memory and identity, and more contemporary foreign policy and public opinion research, yet they are discussed here primarily because they were the most important aspects of observers' written accounts. Thus selection of these themes is led by both a reading of related literature and, importantly, what observers most frequently chose to write about themselves.

Legitimacy

Observers interpreted Britain's recent conflicts as important events involving death and sacrifice, and as such were keen to evaluate whether the use of force was morally and politically justified.[180] The legitimacy of force is of course, not objectively defined and norms on which military force is justified have altered throughout international history.[181] More recently in Britain the Iraq War has illuminated the ways in which legitimacy is contested in public.[182] Yet, British people are able to arrive at their own understandings of legitimacy which are also contested and divergent. While arguments provided from 'above' by political elites are of course important in guiding and contextualising 'ordinary' opinions, Philip Towle has shown that debates surrounding the use of force within the public sphere are related intimately to the ways in which individuals understand the use of violent force, under what circumstances it is appropriate, and how they construct narratives of Britain's identity as a military power in relation to these personal factors.[183] As I seek to demonstrate in this research, observers' interpretations of legitimacy were complex and varied, but they uniformly involved *Britain's* position. Observers wanted to ascertain whether Britain, in using force in the contemporary period, could be considered a 'force for good',[184] thus legitimacy represents a basic and

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[180] I apply a broad perspective on the definition of legitimacy here and take it to refer to the moral or political acceptability of the use of force. The ways in which legitimacy is conceived by observers is the object of study in this regard, not the theoretical nature of legitimacy or how it functions in wider society. For such a consideration regarding the Iraq War in Britain, see: Strong, *Public Opinion*, 60-64.

[181] Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[182] Jamie Gaskarth, "Intervention, Domestic Contestation and Britain's national role conceptions", in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, edited by Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo. (London: Routledge, 2016); Jack Holland, "Blair's War on Terror: Selling Intervention to Middle England", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 14, no. 1 (2012): 74-95; Strong, "More spinn'd"; Strong, *Public Opinion*, 64-66; Towle, *Going to War*, 142-155.

[183] Towle, *Going to War*, 11-23.

[184] Colley, "Is Britain a Force for Good?"

universally important marker for interpreting Britain's *national* identity throughout the period from 1982 to 2014.

The ways in which legitimacy is derived are more complex. As polling and survey analysis has shown, the public are not simply worried about 'body counts' or relative losses. The 'principle objective' of military force must be considered legitimate; losses are acceptable in situations where force is acceptable, and *vice versa*.[185] Observers' responses offer individual-level evidence for this assertion. Further, while the apparent context and prevailing circumstances of Britain's military conflicts have been important in fashioning ideas about legitimacy, observers do not simply consume media or governmental interpretations. They are often well informed but arrive at varied and divergent conclusions on the use of force. In fact, observers continually appraised contemporary situations by reference to Britain's national past, embedding current events in narratives of national history and drawing on popular memories of past wars as a point of reference or benchmark.[186] Perhaps most obvious in this respect were observers' persistent invocations of Britain's road to war in the late 1930s and a continual reconstruction of a narrative based on the failure of Britain's policy of appeasement.[187] Both were mobilised by observers in order to clarify the circumstances in which military action could be considered justified and appropriate in the present. Such dynamics demonstrate the ways in which memory and contemporary circumstance inform each

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[185] Richard C. Eichenberg, "Victory Has Many Friends", *International Security*. 30, no. 1 (2005): 140-177; Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force", *International Studies Quarterly*. 36, no. 1 (1992): 49-74; Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, "Rally 'Round the Union Jack? Public Opinion and the Use of Force in the United Kingdom", *International Studies Quarterly*. 49, no. 1 (2005): 255-272; Towle, *Going to War*.

[186] Popular memories of past experiences, like the Second World War, which are celebrated or remembered favourably can form the basis of 'guides' to action in the present. See: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 2.

[187] For a consideration of the importance of the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War in Britain, see: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271; Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 188-217. For a discussion of the association of the 'failure' of appeasement and Neville Chamberlain, and its enduring appeal as a cultural motif in Britain, see: Julie V. Gottlieb, "Neville Chamberlain's Umbrella: 'Object' Lessons in the History of Appeasement", *Twentieth Century British History*. 27, no. 3 (2016): 357-388.

other and, importantly, show the extent to which observers are engaged in constructing a common history in which debates over the legitimacy of using force are fundamental. During later occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq, observers were less likely to draw on popular memory of Britain's Second World War as it seemed to retain little explanatory power over contemporary circumstances. As a result it became more difficult for observers to both articulate the legitimacy of Britain's contemporary military position, but also construct a broader, assured narrative of historical identity embedded in experience of World War Two. Thus connections between Britain's current and past identities in war became increasingly fragmented within the context of British involvement in the 'War on Terror'.

The Military and Combat

Naturally, any discussion of armed conflict – observers' included – pertains to a purely military dimension. As Tarak Barkawi has argued, the social and identity effects associated with war cannot readily be detached from the circumstances of combat; "they [war's social effects] have something to do with what happened in the war itself".[188] For observers, it is evident that the themes I discuss here are distinct but not inseparable. Interpretations of combat and military outcome affected their perspectives on legitimacy, yet what observers believed about the legitimacy of any single operation affected what they wrote about the soldiers and institutions which prosecuted it. Further still, the military and its institutions were also represented as a distinct part of Britain's identity and history, which is greater than the sum of its military engagements.[189] Indeed, as Anthony King has described, the sacrifice brought upon Britain's forces has been

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[188] Barkawi, "From War to Security", 711.
[189] Paris, *Warrior Nation*.

"honoured in spite of the cause"[190] in recent deployments as the population conceive of the military in opposition to the government or state, and as a set of institutions with its own identity. Observers accounts of military action in each of the cases I consider frequently formed part of constructions of a British military identity, and revealed assumptions about the role of the military in British history and society, as well as the contemporary period.

The connection between Britain and its military centred primarily on discussions of military personal, alongside a broader consideration of military institutions, branches and tactics. Both were of course, affected by contemporary context. All conflicts gave opportunity for observers to discuss Britain's military personnel, though instances of high profile land combat engendered a greater intensity of discussion, and contributed to the construction (and, in some cases, subversion) of the central figure of the 'soldier hero'.[191] Despite their professional status, Britain's armed forces, at a personal level, embodied bravery, sacrifice and a quality of character that persisted within responses despite the varied political circumstances of the deployments. The empathy and support directed at military personnel was accompanied within responses, by representations of British military power, broadly conceived. Here combat was not linked personally to the soldiers who fought, but instead to military tactics and technology. In particular the use of air power as a primary mode of combat in the 1990s and early 2000s helped to figure what observers wrote about Britain's role in its recent wars and its identity. Though support for the military was a consistent feature of collected responses, questions and reservations over British tactics formed part of a critical attitude and contributed ideas of identity that

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[190] Anthony King, "The Afghan War and 'Postmodern' Memory: Commemoration and the Dead of Helmand", *British Journal of Sociology*. 61, no. 1 (2010): 1-25.
[191] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.

observers frequently disapproved of; carelessness, heavy-handedness or a failure to use force discriminately.

Importantly, Britain's contemporary military identity, and what observers imagined warfare to be like in the contemporary period, was fashioned with persistent reference to the past. Memories of combat and warfare – sometimes personal, though increasingly popular or 'prosthetic' – helped observers make sense of contemporary circumstance, both what individual soldiers might experience or feel, and what certain tactics, like the use of air power, might entail.[192] Most importantly, this connection between present and past created a sense of a specifically military identity in which Britain remained a martial power. Contemporary circumstance brought forth invocations of past military experience and memory, thereby reaffirming certain narratives of common and shared history.

Leaders and Leadership

Observers also related Britain's contemporary wars to political leaders, most frequently reduced to the single figure of the Prime Minister. War leadership is an important aspect of wartime memories as individual leaders are thought to embody the experience of the nation or provide a figurehead for the state. For example, Winston Churchill's wartime leadership has remained a central aspect of Britain's Second World War memory embodying Britain's national struggle; resistance to appeasement, determination,

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[192] The extent to which Britain's military institutions embodied national experience in the Second World War has been explored at length and forms and important aspect of observers' collected responses. While naval combat is rapidly made absent among responses by during the Falklands campaign, land combat and, in particular, the Blitz and strategic bombing are all important aspects of Britain's military past which were discussed frequently by observers. For consideration of the ways in which military institutions and branches contributed to popular memories of the Second World War in Britain, see: Francis, *The Flyer*; Houghton, "Writing the Missing Chapter"; Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe, 1939-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Summerfield, "Dunkirk".

resilience, the 'bulldog spirit'.[193] As with all aspects of popular memory, appraisals of Churchill's leadership have been contested, yet it remains the case that the figure of the Prime Minister – and their perceived role in military conflict – acts as a salient indicator of popular interpretations of wartime identity, and serves as an important connection between the apparatus and policies of the state and government, and the British nation in whose interest they are supposed to act.

Prime Ministerial leadership was a frequently-discussed part of observers' accounts across all cases (with perhaps, the exception of the 1990 Gulf War). Its importance here is due firstly for those reasons stated above; that two Prime Ministers in particular – Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair – were seen as an embodiment of Britain's position or representative of British policy in the international crises and conflicts for which they were responsible. Secondly however, responses show how the nation was conceived of in relation to representatives of the state, often revealing a separation of the two. Involvement in conflicts in which legitimacy was thought not to be assured for the British, or in which the military outcome was in doubt, elicited a pervasive juxtaposition of governmental leadership with ideas of *national* identity. Observers did not make simple judgements on the decisions of government or the Prime Minister, but instead incorporated them into much broader narratives of identity in the contemporary conflict, and in relation to Britain's national past, again, overwhelmingly referring to popular memories of the Second World War. Through both embodiment and contrast, all observers who wrote about leadership across these cases reflected what they thought about Britain's role in recent conflicts, memories of the further past and broader narratives of national identity which they conveyed.

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[193] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 120-125.
For a consideration of the manner in which Churchill fashioned his own reputation during and after the Second World War, see: David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

Others, International Institutions, Allies and Enemies

Observers' responses reflect a further critical aspect of the construction of national identities throughout, namely the identification of, and comparison with, Others.[194] As Linda Colley has noted, Britain's identity was one forged from its inception by the identification of the self in contrast to "an obviously hostile Other".[195] This dynamic helped to fashion popular narratives of British identity in the Second World War as the conflict came to be remembered as a struggle between a free, tolerant, democratic and peaceful people forced to fight by a tyrannical, dictatorial and aggressive Nazi Germany.[196] Similarly, this process of othering must be afforded an evaluation in Britain's more recent conflicts, a central aspect of which has been the 'investment' of Western identities in constructions of the unfree, liberated and oriental Other.[197] Indeed, conflicts in the Balkans and Afghanistan in particular elicited constructions of savage, perennial violence against which an interpretation of British civilisation and modernity could be articulated by contrast.

This process was a persistent feature of observers' responses throughout all cases I consider. It is important to establish however, that it applied to a range of Others, did not result in uniform or predictable conclusions, and constructions of Others were related intimately to circumstance. Throughout the period observers were eager to identify

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[194] 'Othering' is a concept considered frequently in academic psychology, sociology, history and politics. I do not go into detail explaining it here, suffice it to say that I use it to refer to the process by which observers revealed assumptions about their own identity by contrasting it with the perceived identities of other (national) groups. For a more theoretical overview related to nationality and ethnicity, see: Jensen "Othering, Identity Formation and Agency".

[195] Colley, *Britons*, 6.

[196] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*; Dan Stone, "'The Greatest Detective Story in History': The BBC, the International Tracing Service,   and the Memory of Nazi Crimes in Early Post-war Britain", *History and Memory*. 29, no. 2 (2017): 63-89: The BBC, the International Tracing Service, and the Memory of Nazi Crimes in Early Post-war Britain", *History and Memory*. 29, no. 2 (2017): 63-89; Ruth Wittlinger, "British-German Relations and Collective Memory", *German Politics and Society*. 25, no. 3 (2007): 42-69.

[197] Barkawi, "'Small Wars'", 128.

Britain's place in the world through a discussion of international institutions – and how Britain might be involved in or bound by them – and through constructions of the identities of its allies, most notably that of the United States. The context and history of the 'special relationship' was bound intimately to memories of both nations' national pasts[198] and interaction with allied nations provided an opportunity for British people in past conflicts to create a sense of self by contrast or comparison. In the Second World War British identity was constructed in comparison with and contrast against that of the Americans who were "over-sexed, over-paid and over here", threatening British culture and sexual norms,[199] and whose racial strife at home indicated an intolerant national character. As Sonya Rose has written, being British "meant being tolerant, at least more tolerant than white Americans".[200] Comparison with both the United States as a preponderant international and military power – a position revealed by Britain's junior status within repeated military coalitions – and with European allies contributed to constructions of Britain's contemporary identity by contrast.

Most frequently however, observers constructed a sense of British identity by contrast against its enemies. Even in cases where the legitimacy of an actual use of force was considered unwarranted or illegitimate, most observers were keen to stress the aggressive, expansionary, intolerant, brutal and dictatorial nature of the enemy. The persistent use of a 'fascist' epithet – directed specifically at Leopoldo Galtieri, Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic - indicates the pervasive memory of Nazi Germany as a frame of reference for interpreting contemporary enemies.[201] Further still, Britain's identity was given a temporal quality across cases by a widespread perception of having faced a particular and familiar kind of opponent in each of these cases. Only in Britain's

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[198] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 294-296; Danchev, "Tony Blair's Vietnam"; Porter, "Last charge".
[199] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 186-189.
[200] Rose, *Which People's War?*, 262.
[201] I find much support throughout here for the ubiquity of Adolf Hitler as the embodiment of evil and Britain's most familiar enemy. See: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.

most recent conflicts have anti-terror operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and drawn out occupation against sectarian groups, made this connection more problematic; a fact encountered by politicians in the United States and Britain who sought once more to redeploy the languages of anti-fascism in order to legitimise continued military engagement.[202] This new context of elusive and unfamiliar enemies contributed to a broader phenomenon among responses in which ideas of resistance to fascism and dictatorship – at the root of popular memory of the Second World War – seemed increasingly irrelevant, further fragmenting observers' connections between Britain's identity in contemporary conflict and a celebrated and assured past wartime identity.

Summary: Mass Observers and Recent Wars

All of these themes represent aspects of observers' discourse in which ideas of British identity were articulated, and all are aspects of their discourse in which popular memories, particularly that of the Second World War, were crucial in clarifying, an effect of which was the continuing creation and recreation of a sense of common history. As I seek to show, few observers drew on memory of the First World War – surprising given its continued prominence in the public sphere – or on memory of Britain's empire, decolonisation and post-imperial conflicts; surprising given their closer chronological proximity and similarity in scale to more recent 'small wars'. Observers remained well informed and, as a group of people motivated to write, were able to discuss the political and military circumstances of recent wars. Yet it is evident that conflict from 1982 to 2014 was conceived of repeatedly and intensely as part of Britain's national story, and not as isolated events. Each conflict was understood as a specific and unique set of

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[202] Shorten, "The Failure of Political Argument".

circumstances with its own causes and outcomes, but also contributed to a broader process of invocation of the national past in which Britain's identity, most often based in the experience of fighting Nazi Germany, was continually reconstructed.

Changing circumstances in the present have altered the ways in which observers remembered the past and constructed narratives of British identity yet this has not forced a radical revision of Britain's identity during the Second World War. Instead, certain aspects of that war have retained a greater explanatory power over present circumstances, and are accordingly invoked more frequently by observers. Though the overall narrative of a 'good war' remains, its constituent events are recalled according to their utility in the present. Even throughout the Iraq crisis and the subsequent conflict – a deployment which the majority of observers believed to be unambiguously illegitimate – familiar memories of World War Two were invoked (now largely devoid of personal experience among observers) in order to contrast present circumstance, thereby delegitimising contemporary British policy. Despite a perception of decline in the standards of legitimacy across its recent wars – reaching a nadir in Iraq – these conflicts gave observers an opportunity to invoke memory of the Second World War and thereby reconstruct a morally assured and celebrated British identity. Their responses show how perceived political and military failures in the present can contribute to the reinforcing of a coherent national past.

However, the invocation of popular memories of the Second World, and the reconstruction of a related and specific narrative of British identity, occurred only when circumstances in the present permitted it, and when it was thought that they could help explain the contemporary context. As British involvement in Iraq, and later Afghanistan, moved from invasion to occupation, and from resistance to a dictatorship to suppression of militias and paramilitaries, observers became increasingly unlikely to make direct connection between contemporary conflict and World War Two. Thus the reconstruction

of an assured and moral military identity became fragmented as perceptions of both post-invasion Iraq and the increasingly intense war in Afghanistan became unmoored from a narrative of historical experience dominated by World War Two. Observers instead began to focus on religion, ethnicity and domestic politics, none of which offered the same sort of historical or moral certainty. It is striking to consider both the apparent longevity of *popular* memories of Britain's Second World War among collected responses, particularly as it moves from living memory and *personal* experience between 1982 and 2003, and their subsequent absence as Britain became ever more involved in the contemporary 'War on Terror'.

What follows is a chronological account of Britain's Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as explained and understood by Mass Observers. Each of these conflicts is accorded a separate chapter within which I have structured analysis around discussion of the themes identified above. I begin by considering responses written in early-mid 1982 during the Falklands crisis and the subsequent military conflict. I then move to consider responses written in late 1990 and early 1991 as British forces took part in the military effort to remove the Iraqi military from Kuwait. The third chapter draws on responses written primarily in 1999 after the beginning of Operation Allied Force (NATO's effort to force the Yugoslav military and Serbian militias to desist from their escalating campaign in Kosovo). The final two chapters consider the broadly contemporaneous deployments to Afghanistan from 2001 (itself escalated from 2006 after the redeployment of a much larger British force to Helmand Province) and Iraq from 2003. These latter cases cover a much longer period of time both from an historical perspective, and within the breadth of Mass Observation material. Unlike the three previous cases, they lasted decades rather than months. I have attempted to cover them comprehensively by including a larger volume of responses from multiple directives. I

have however, afforded them similar space and consideration within the broader structure of the thesis.

Though of course, the representation of wars always has something to do with what actually happened in them,[203] I have not sought to provide a detailed diplomatic, political, military or historical analysis in each case. Rather I have attempted only to give essential context to observers' written accounts. The thesis is structured throughout with what Mass Observers wrote as the primary focus and thus I hope it can be read as a chronological journey through the written material of successive cohorts of observers rather than an evaluation or critique of Britain's recent foreign policy or military history. I offer a short concluding chapter in which this period of Mass Observation Project material, written between 1982 and 2014, is considered in sum, and what it tells us about the way in which they approached this period of intermittent British military conflict and, by extension, the nation's identity.

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[203] Barkawi, "From War to Security", 711.

The Falklands War 1982

In March 1982 Argentine marines took control of the island of South Georgia. Aware that the Junta was acting unilaterally on their claim to British territorial possessions in the region, officials in the British government and Ministry of Defence began working on a military plan to retake the neighbouring Falkland Islands, which were subsequently invaded and occupied by Argentine forces on 2 April 1982.[204] Though both sides were called upon to negotiate by the United Nations and the United States following the occupation, the British government, with the support of Parliament, continued with its military response. The campaign centred on the assembly of a Naval Task force which, in addition to deploying a number of warships and submarines, would transport around ten thousand British personnel to retake the islands. Though considered a potentially risky venture, the conflict was ultimately a resounding victory for the British. The controversial sinking of the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano* on 2 May largely ended any naval opposition (though the threat from Argentina's air force remained throughout), and a series of decisive battles on the islands themselves ended in victory for Britain's professional forces over what was primarily a conscripted Argentine force. A ceasefire was signed on 14 June after the surrender of the capital, Port Stanley.[205]

The conflict had lasted nearly two months and two weeks, and though the war occurred at a point of increasing Cold War tension, it was a bilateral affair essentially unrelated to the any broader ideological struggle; the first, as Lawrence Freedman has

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[204] Freedman, *Official History*.

[205] Academic and journalistic accounts of Britain's Operation Corporate, and the impact of the conflict more broadly, are voluminous. For an overview of Britain's Falklands War however, see: Boyce, *The Falklands War*; Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater and Peter Gillman, *The Falklands War* (London: Sphere Books, 1982); Freedman, *Official History*; Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (London: Pan, 2010).

suggested, of Britain's post-Cold War engagements.[206] Indeed, fighting overseas in defence of British sovereign territory, in a bilateral conflict against a military Junta, offered an extraordinary set of circumstances for ordinary British people and, as I show in this chapter, elicited discussion of particular ideas of British identity and the invocation of specific popular memories of the past which were thought to be relevant.

I consider responses to the 1982 Falkland Islands crisis directive (identified from here as the Falklands directive) submitted by thirty-five individual observers. The Falklands directive generated a total of 242 individual sets of responses (comprising 1199 pages of hand written material) which were submitted to an initial special directive titled "The Falkland Islands Crisis: War with Argentina" issued in April 1982 (just after the Argentinian occupation of the islands), and a subsequent directive titled "Falkland/Malvinas Postscript" issued in the summer after the end of the conflict.[207] The original directive asked observers to comment on the prospects of negotiations, whether Britain should use military force, and what they expected if so. It suggested that observers attempt to record their reactions to developments in 'diary' form. Coupled with the postscript directive which asked for observers thoughts after the conflict, the sample I consider here includes responses written at all points from April to the later summer.

The volume of responses that the Falklands directive generated demonstrates the importance ascribed by observers to the crisis unfolding in the South Atlantic. As I seek to show throughout, this rate of response was matched by the detail and intensity with which observers wrote about the conflict. They were evidently reacting to events that were presented to them through press, media and from the government. The prospect of British and Argentine soldiers being killed in the Falkland Islands elicited particular focus on the moral and political legitimacy of using force; observers were concerned primarily

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[206] Freedman, *Official History*, 643.
[207] See Appendix II.

with establishing whether it was right to pursue military conflict, and whether the conditions of the Argentinian occupation merited it. They also sought to make sense of the combat taking place on and around the islands, and establish Britain's identity relative to its allies and enemies. All these aspects were written about with an urgency and attention that was linked to the particular aspects of killing, death and sacrifice associated with war. Yet it is also apparent that observers believed that a war fought against Argentina revealed something about Britain - its values, behaviour and place in the world, in short, aspects of its identity – and that these ideas were often clarified by invocation of the further past.

The Second World War was much closer to observers writing in 1982 when compared to observers responding to later directives. The mean year of birth of the sample of thirty five was 1931 and, of the thirty-five observers' in the sample, fourteen were born before 1930. Most observers considered here either lived through 'the last war' or grew up in its immediate social, political and cultural wake. Thus the Falklands conflict elicited persistent invocation of the past, though, as I seek to show presently, personal recollections were articulated alongside re-invocation of broader popular memories of appeasement, Nazi aggression, and Britain's road to war specifically.

Most observers wrote about British involvement in the Falklands War in stark terms. Very few were ambiguous about its legitimacy, or lack thereof, and thus few hesitated in describing what it reflected about Britain's role within it. A minority, just under a third, of observers objected to the conflict, most often emphasising the militaristic and rash nature of the British response. For most however, legitimacy was assured; Britain was thought to be a democracy, protecting itself against the illegitimate advance of dictatorial, 'fascist' regime, whilst also exercising its historically evident military prowess and quality. These ideas, particularly among those who supported the campaign,

were framed heavily by remembrance of the Second World War. The invocation of popular memories related to German aggression, Nazism and Adolf Hitler in particular helped many to clarify their perspectives on the present. Likewise, by extension, the conflict also offered an opportunity for observers to relive personal experience and reconstruct popular memories of World War Two, thereby reaffirming a broader sense of common history and unique British experience. As in later conflicts in Iraq and the Balkans, regardless of observers' perspectives on the legitimacy of British involvement, the possibility of armed conflict elicited construction and reconstruction of Britain's broader historical identity as both a military power and – centred largely on its Second World War – a force for good.

Legitimacy

Few observers were confused or ambivalent about the legitimacy of retaking the Falklands Islands by force. Observers who chose to write about the conflict clearly felt the situation was grave and threatened the lives of British and Argentinian soldiers and as such, the desire to establish its legitimacy was a persistent feature of their responses. Though most were supportive of the British campaign, believing that it was fully justified, a minority (ten of the thirty five-observers considered here) were critical. Importantly, they did not often link their objections to pacifist beliefs, or suggest that the use of military force was wrong in all cases. Most emphasised instead the militaristic or reactionary nature of the campaign. One observer, writing after the war (in November 1982), described the campaign as a "fiasco" and "a totally unnecessary war".[208] Another wrote a similar account during the conflict:

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[208] MO A21, female, born 1931.

There is no moral justification for Britain's going to war or threatening to do so… The despatch of the task force is a threat; if it succeeds it will enable the government of Mrs Thatcher to claim that only by backing diplomacy with force can peace and legitimate objectives be achieved.[209]

Some evidently felt that it was wrong for Britain to use military force as other options were available. Yet these observers were careful not to be seen to be writing in support of the Argentine claim or their occupation of the islands. Instead, they critiqued the reactionary nature of British policy which seemed to be based too heavily on a military response:

What Britain should have done was to react with firm resolution against a dictator-invasion. This was of course vitally necessary - no-one is denying the argument for this. But to react into war-like intentions by sending the task force was absurd - well it would be if it were not so potentially dangerous.[210]

Such responses were fewer in number than those which were supportive. In fact, for those who were critical of Britain's response, discussion of legitimacy was frequently accompanied by observers' self-representation as a minority articulating a perspective opposite to perceived public opinion. One observer described the contemporary atmosphere; "if a word against [the retaking of the Islands by force] is said you will be accused of being unpatriotic".[211] Another wrote a similar account:

I have felt totally alienated from popular opinion and so conscious of holding up a minority view

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[209] MO C142, male, born 1932.
[210] MO F210, female, born 1925.
[211] MO S496, female, born 1927.

that in company I constantly hoped that the topic would not come up, especially with elderly

relatives (my father excepted).[212]

Observers who opposed the Falklands campaign often had clear ideas about the

illegitimacy of using military force as a tool of government policy, and believed strongly

that a diplomatic solution to the crisis should be found, yet they were also, sometimes

painfully, aware that their perspective was not widely shared within British society, and

admitted quiescence in the face of apparent public support. The febrile atmosphere

sparked by the war was evidenced by observers' reluctance to discuss issues in public,

and a feeling of isolation for those who objected. For one – their staunch opposition to the

campaign quoted above – the contemporary media reaction to the crisis was "reminiscent

of the jingo papers before 1914".[213] Britain's apparent rush to use military force, and the

militaristic attitude which seemed to enable it, could be understood by comparison with

the perceived waste and futility of the First World War.[214]

Other observers were less specific in their objections, focusing on the illegitimacy

of using force without going into the specific details of Falkland Islands crisis or the

status of the islands themselves. One stated that "where aggression was started it should

have been stopped but in this case it shouldn't have been allowed to start and I think

when (I hope) it settles down there will be a peaceful solution"[215] while another, writing

after the conflict, concurred; "I don't think wars really solve anything and I don't think the

Falklands situation is resolved, at least not permanently."[216]

Likewise, some observers were dismayed when they weighed the possibility of

death and sacrifice against the goal of recovering the islands. One wrote shortly after the

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[212] MO G226, female, born 1941.
[213] MO C142, male, born 1932
[214] See: Todman, *The Great War*, 121-152.
[215] MO A23, female, born 1912.
[216] MO B45, female, born 1925.

departure of the task force; "'I find it very distasteful that we have sent out warships and put at risk the lives of our servicemen and women.'"[217] Another observer reacted instinctively to the unfolding crisis:

> As I watch and read the news and listen to the propaganda from both sides it all seems so anachronistic and so out of tune with my own feelings about international relations that the whole thing 'jars'. I do not want Britons or Argentinians to die fighting one another.[218]

Fundamentally all of these responses shared a sense of apprehension and disgust with the possibility of armed conflict in 1982. Yet the manner and intensity with which it was articulated varied. Some wrote clearly and concisely about the illegitimacy of Britain's position and described how force could not be justified when diplomacy remained an option. Others were simply worried that a war to reclaim the Falkland Islands seemed disproportionate and unnecessary; a sentiment that was discernible to some degree among responses to all directives I consider in this research. Few observers believed that the use of military force was *intrinsically* illegitimate and no observers here were willing to suggest that Argentina had been right to occupy the islands. Observers who criticised Britain's military response to the occupation of the islands were often explicit about being outnumbered within a society that seemed to overwhelming support the campaign.

Importantly, very few observers described themselves as pacifists. A recurrent theme within responses to all the directives I consider in this research is the distinction made by observers between the legitimacy of military force itself, and the legitimacy of force in particular circumstances. The peripheral status of the islands or the apparent possibility for negotiation undermined the legitimacy of the military action pursued by the

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[217] MO B68, female, born 1931.
[218] MO B91, female, born 1930.

British government, not any arguments related to the acceptability of force itself. These observers were far more likely to have objected to the jingoistic atmosphere which seemed to have resulted in or enabled the crisis to escalate rather than suggesting that control of the Falkland Islands should be conceded, or that Britain had a weaker claim. Importantly, no observers linked Britain's Falklands campaign to a broader critique of its world role or its identity; the conflict was seen by its dissenters within Mass Observation largely as an isolated case.

Most observers – twenty-five of the thirty-five considered here - believed that a military operation to recover the Falkland Islands was legitimate and justified, and that they were part of a supportive majority within society more broadly.[219] They wrote variously that "I have believed all the time that we should act if negotiations fail, and have not met anyone who does not feel the same",[220] that "most people feel the Falklands Islands cannot be allowed to be taken away from us by force"[221] and that "there can be no doubt that the majority view is that we had to take action to preserve UK sovereignty".[222]

The pursuit of a just war had, for one observer, seemed to foster a sense of national unity:

> The general feeling is one of patriotism among the people and even the political parties seem on the whole to be in agreement, apart from one or two who seem to think that we should not have taken steps to send either ships or troops to the area in spite of us having been invaded by the Argentinians.[223]

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[219] While it was the Thatcher government's policy to reclaim the islands by force it is a matter of historical fact that the official opposition, headed by Michael Foot, was in agreement that it was necessary to repel the aggression of a dictatorship by force. Dissenting voices in Parliament such as Tam Dalyell, Tony Benn and Judith Hart represented a minority - if vocal - opposition to war. See: Anthony Barnett, *Iron Britannia: Why Parliament Waged Its Falklands War* (London: Alison and Busby, 1982), 24-45; Boyce, *The Falklands War,* 45-51; Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History*, 16-17.

[220] MO B35, female, born 1941.

[221] MO B43, male, born 1956.

[222] MO D157, male, born 1918.

[223] MO B53, female, born 1926.

Of course, the ways in which observers articulated this support varied. However, ideas of British territorial sovereignty, national ownership of the islands and the resulting imperative of self-defence most often coloured what supportive observers wrote. Retrieval and possession were crucial themes in such responses, reinforcing the sense that Britain had a right to regain what had been taken unilaterally and, in particular, *aggressively* by another state. One observer described how "if negotiations fail we should act, by taking the Falklands back by force if necessary"[224] while another, writing after the conflict, celebrated a conclusion in which the "[the British] retained our right to the Falklands."[225] The sentiment was summarised by another:

> Never have I wavered, we must get them [the Falklands Islands] back… I feel we warned Argentina and they knew we were coming. It is Argentina who were the aggressors. Britain is in the right.[226]

Observers described Britain as a nation acting in self-defence. Indeed, some observers characterised the campaign to retake the islands as an obligation or a test of the right of all states and peoples to defend themselves against aggression. One observer's narrative was typical:

> I have maintained the thoughts I had about the Falklands from start to now. We have backed away from any possibly nasty situation since the war and tried to placate and appease. It doesn't work - tyrants just get stronger. I feel we HAD to go in on a matter of principle.[227]

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[224] MO C125, male, born 1916.
[225] MO F192, female, born 1951.
[226] MO B36, female, born 1914.
[227] MO C134, female, born 1932.

The identification of tyranny further underscored a belief in the aggressive and unjustifiable nature of the Argentinian occupation but also, as I discuss in more detail shortly, contributed to a sense that the Falklands campaign was further justified because it was being pursued against a clearly understood and singularly illegitimate enemy regime. The need to act forcefully was given extra urgency by the allusion to appeasement; a powerful and frequent comparison within observers' responses.

Another observer described how Britain had to deploy its military forces or face the embarrassment of abdicating its right to self-defence:

> If negotiations fail should we act? At this point in time the answer has been given and we have acted. After deploying the task force I feel we had little choice but to act, we would have looked rather foolish having sent them there only to withdraw. Our credibility would have been destroyed…
> I feel that military action will prove to the rest of the world that we are not just going to be sat on and that we will react with or without the support of our neighbours and allies.[228]

Strikingly, these individuals did not link their arguments to detailed discussion of international agreements, convention or law, and they did not place the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands and their rights as a primary cause for action. Instead, they emphasised the legitimacy of Britain's reaction as a rebuttal to the aggressions of a foreign power. Importantly, they were concerned primarily with establishing the legitimacy of the conflict by considering what it meant for Britain, and thereby narrating the conflict as a British experience. Legitimacy could be assured if it Britain could be identified as a defensive actor, resisting outside aggression.

Frequently observers invoked Britain's entry into the Second World War in order to make sense of the contemporary situation, drawing a comparison between the

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[228] MO C138, female, born 1944.

aggressions of Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and the Argentine occupation of the Falkland Islands. One observer asked, "I also wonder sometimes, what is there to negotiate? What would have happened if we had negotiated with Hitler? You can't negotiate with murderers."[229] Another suggested that the crisis had "seemed to me at the time, a repeat of Hitler and his gradual takeover of land."[230] A sense of legitimacy predicated on Britain's right to resist and defend itself against undue aggression was central to the majority of observers' responses but was also frequently articulated by reference to the national past. Direct comparison with Adolf Hitler's tyrannical occupation of neighbouring countries and the perceived failure of appeasement both engaged observers in a reconstruction of a simplistic and moral narrative of entry into World War Two,[231] and helped clarify Britain's identity in the current Falklands conflict by association.

Other observers interpreted legitimacy primarily as a defence of the rights of the Falkland Islanders themselves. One observer argued during the crisis period that "it is obvious that talks are not getting us nor the Islanders anywhere"[232] while another wrote of the need to protect an exposed island community:

Nobody I know wants war, and we all hope the problem will be solved peacefully. Some of my colleagues say, well, why bother about these little islands - there's nothing there. I disagree with this attitude, and I feel deeply for the 1800 Islanders…If we stood by and did nothing, then other outposts might find themselves suddenly overwhelmed, e.g. Hong Kong or Gibraltar?[233]

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[229] MO C138, female, born 1944.
[230] MO B48, male, born 1908.
[231] Connelly, *We Can Take It!,* 269-271; Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 188-217.
[232] MO B66, female, born 1930.
[233] MO B89, female, born 1931.

Among similar responses, observers argued that the failure to protect the Islanders from invasion and occupation would set a dangerous precedent, and imperilled the rights of all British subjects.[234] Another observer made the point at length:

> Reasons given [for a military responses] are the obvious ones: that 1800 Islanders look to us for protection, that ignoring it or doing nothing lends encouragement to any militant state to walk in on any peaceful, unprotected territory...Whether we are censured by other countries in the longer term, I know that many people throughout the world now hold us in more respect than they have done for many years. This may not justify our action in the eyes of those who believe in peace at any price, nor those who think 1800 Falkland Islanders and a small acreage of not very fertile land are not worth bothering about, but it is important to those who know that a country which does not safeguard its citizens wherever they may be shows that it has no values of any real worth.[235]

Again, for the same observer, the Second World War was referred to in passing as a benchmark for the legitimacy of using military force for protection:

> On the broader aspects, although I believe military action should be absolutely the last resort, I must admit to satisfaction tinged with surprise that for once we are returning to the bygone standards of protecting Britons wherever they may be. Since WWII our record in this respect has been abysmal.[236]

As the crisis over the Falklands unfolded observers more frequently attempted to imagine what life was like on the islands, what occupation meant, and how this related to a possible military response. However, representations of the islands and their people did not prescribe conclusions on the use of military force to reclaim them. Indeed, some

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[234] Though the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands were not granted full citizenship of the United Kingdom until 1983, after they had been reclassified a citizens of British Dependent Territories in 1981.
[235] MO D157, male, born 1918.
[236] MO D157, male, born 1918.

observers who did not support a military campaign reinforced their argument by highlighting the political insignificance of the Islands or even ridiculing their remoteness and apparently primitive lifestyle; the "Falkland Islanders should be well compensated to leave with their sheep."[237]

Most observers who wrote about the island inhabitants were more sympathetic, articulating Britain's obligation to defend the islands by force alongside romantic notions of island life and what was imagined to be a peaceful and vulnerable community. One observer wrote:

> My first reaction when sparse news started appearing in the papers about the Falkland Islands was – where are they anyway? Since then, so many people have said the same thing, and even now it's a constant source of amazement that a little piece of Britain can exist so many miles away! Each time we see Islanders being interviewed on their exit from the Falklands, I expect them to speak with an accent![238]

For like-minded observers, the Falkland Islands were more than just British territory. They were home to inhabitants of British ancestry, their right to freedom bound to their British nationality; the occupation seemed to be a direct attack on British people.[239] Others stressed that the Islanders had a right to existence free from occupation, foregrounding the precariousness of their existence, and thereby contributing to a sense that Britain, as a powerful and modern actor by comparison, was bound to protect them:

> Some of my colleagues say, well, why bother about these little islands – there's nothing there. I

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[237] MO B84, female, born 1921.
[238] MO B35, female, born 1941.
[239] For a discussion of the cultural representation of life on the Falkland Islands, see: Tim Wilcox, "'We are All Falklanders Now': Art, War and National Identity", in *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*, edited by James Aulich (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992).

disagree with this attitude, and feel deeply for the 1800 Islanders who love their homes and tranquil life.[240]

Our people endured a life style which could not develop much beyond one which vanished in Europe and the rest of the developed world 40 or 50 years ago. They have accepted the restrictions placed upon them by the distances which separate them from the nearest developed countries (and I place Argentina quite low down the 'developing' ladder), and especially from their nearest relatives and home country, and deserve to be left in peace.[241]

Indeed, it was the Falklands crisis itself which brought observers into contact with the Islanders. Some simply admitted to not knowing where the Falkland Islands were, or who inhabited them. One observer described how "very few of us knew where the Falkland Islands were, my hairdresser told me that he thought that they were in the Orkneys as no doubt many more people thought that they were"[242] while another recalled how they had "looked [the islands] up in an encyclopaedia to find out more, as reports were rather vague."[243] Unsurprisingly, observers who did not know much about the islands or the people who lived on them were unlikely to make them a central aspect of their discussions of the legitimacy of a possible conflict.

In fact the status of the Islands' inhabitants was a weak determinant of the British military campaign's legitimacy within observers' collected responses, perhaps surprisingly so given the subsequent media representation of the Islanders[244] and the importance of their right to 'self-determination' within subsequent British government

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[240] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[241] MO C143, female, born 1932.
[242] MO B53, female, born 1926.
[243] MO B68, female, born 1931.
[244] Maltby, *Remembering the Falklands War*.

policy.[245] Very few saw the despatch of a task force as a humanitarian action (a discourse which becomes prevalent among responses to later conflicts) or linked the retaking of the islands to ideas of human rights. In those cases in which the Islanders were central to responses, legitimacy was based largely on the need to protect people of British ancestry from the possibility that they may have to live in a foreign state or culture. Certainly no observer believed that the inhabitants of the islands were being brutalised or physically harmed, and that this provided an imperative for intervention.

Instead, it was the aggression of the Argentines that was most obvious. Observers were concerned primarily with establishing the legitimacy of the conflict in terms of what it meant for Britain as a nation – its identity – rather than what it meant for individual people affected by it. When confronted with a hostile occupation of Britain's sovereign territory, they most frequently described a military campaign that was justified as an act of self-defence in *Britain's* interests, fought in order to retain *Britain's* right to its sovereign territory or possessions. Likewise, responses submitted by those who objected revealed the extent to which legitimacy and identity were linked. They considered Britain's use of force to retake the islands to be unneeded and unwarranted while diplomatic options remained, identifying *Britain* as an aggressor, regardless of the illegitimacy of the Argentine occupation. Indeed, observers writing in 1982 were much surer about their own views, and what the war revealed about Britain's identity within it, rarely discussing the details of international law or conventions. Though the Falklands War seemed to be supported by a majority of observers (in contrast to later conflicts which were more frequently thought to be unjust), it is this broader *clarity* with which both supporters and opponents narrated British identity in the conflict which separates

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[245] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "2010 to 2015 government policy: Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination", 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-falkland-islanders-right-to-self-determination/2010-to-2015-government-policy-falkland-islanders-right-to-self-determination

their responses from those written by observers concerned with later campaigns, particularly those in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

This clarity was, particularly for those who were supportive, linked intimately to observers' attempts to better explain the present by referring to the past. However, when considering legitimacy specifically, they rarely wrote about personal memories or lived experiences, despite in many cases being old enough to have lived through World War Two. Instead, popular memories of Britain's *entry* into the Second World War most frequently informed how legitimacy could be understood in the present. Observers reconstructed a narrative of legitimate defence against Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion and connected it to Argentina's perceived 'expansion' into British territory. Those who supported the British campaign felt confident about stating their support when they were able suggest a direct connection between British resistance to Nazi Germany and British resistance to Argentina, or when – as I discuss shortly – they were able to actively compare Galtieri or his regime to that of Adolf Hitler. Prompted by contemporary circumstances, supportive observers engaged in a re-invocation of specific popular memories which were thought to better explain or clarify Britain's contemporary position.

Of course, not all observers supported Britain's Falklands campaign. Some drew on memories of waste and futility in the First World War in order to lend weight to their own critique of contemporary policy. However, for the majority who supported the campaign its legitimacy derived from its status as a *defensive* action, an idea which was itself clarified by re-invocation of a singularly moral vision of British entry into World War Two. Thus, British involvement in the Falklands War also represented an opportunity for observers to reconstruct and perpetuate a narrative of historical British identity that was much broader than involvement in the contemporary conflict, and was

embedded in popular memories. In attempting to explain whether the Falklands campaign was right or wrong, these observers focused squarely on the legitimacy and morality of Britain's resistance to Nazi Germany rather than constituent aspects of the war like, for example, the retreat from Dunkirk or the Battle of Britain. The circumstances of the present elicited not only a re-invocation of British participation in World War Two, but involved the reconstruction of a narrative of identity within it that was fundamentally secure and celebrated. The current conflict offered an opportunity for observers to simultaneously articulate Britain's contemporary identity, and a much broader, temporal, and assured identity which involved the reconstruction of Britain's celebrated entry into the Second World War and a refashioned narrative in which appeasement was understood as a failure to combat aggression.[246]

The Military, Combat and Victory

The outbreak of military conflict naturally prompted observers to focus specifically on Britain's military institutions, personnel and the combat undertaken in the Falklands. They were interested to know how the campaign progressed and what was happening to those who were in harm's way. What they wrote about the campaign additionally reflected their ideas about Britain's military as a source of its identity. British personnel in particular were often represented as an embodiment of contemporary British martial prowess and as a temporal link between the present and Britain's history as a military power.

Observers' responses are of course individual and vary greatly in content and detail. Yet they were overwhelmingly supportive of Britain's forces who were thought to

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[246] Finney, *Remembering the Road,* 188-217.

be determined, brave and heroic, and who embodied the broader sense of legitimacy which was established by the majority of observers. All the main branches of the military were considered to be emblematic of Britain's identity, but it is quite clear that as the campaign progressed observers' focus shifted from the departure of a task force which engendered memories of Britain's glorious naval history, to the professional forces on land and in the air where the character of frontline infantry in particular was central. Ideas of personal bravery and heroism coloured a widespread interpretation of combat in which victory in the Falklands represented a vindication of Britain's martial prowess.

Such narratives were wholly congruent with dominant interpretations and memory of Britain's recent military past, notably the difficult yet triumphant defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Indeed, the prospect of armed conflict was linked by some to personal memory of past war. For one observer, imagination of combat and its effects in the Falkland Islands engendered memories of family experience during the Second World War:

> [The observer's mother] lives in sheltered accommodation with people of her age and older, and they are all against action! Although she is only 68, she obviously has such strong memories of the last world war and she and all her contemporaries have no desire to re-live those times. On the other hand, people in my age bracket (30s to 40s) generally speaking are much of the same attitude – go and fight them! We have very vague memories of 1939 to 1945! However, my mother is quick to point out that she and her contemporaries felt much the same at the beginning of World War II, and her mother as very much against it – too many memories of 1914-18! How history does repeat itself.[247]

The possibility of combat specifically, and imagining what it involved for soldiers and their families, prompted observers who were old enough to recall their own personal

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[247] MO B35, female, born 1941.

wartime memories; a dynamic discernible among responses concerning the subsequent Gulf War too. Lived experience of wartime seemed relevant in explaining the cost of military conflict for friends and families of those who fought and served as a point of reference for different generations.[248] Attitudes to contemporary conflict were shaped specifically by experience of those in the past.

Other observers focused on Britain's military institutions as a focus for its identity, invoking a national military past and tradition. For several, the despatch of a naval task force was particularly impressive. The sight of British ships departing for war conjured imagery of a glorious naval identity:

> It [the departure of the task force] was a completely novel experience. It was like a recreation of all those great naval occasions that one knows from history books or dim black and white newsreels: the Armada, Spithead reviews etc. Surely this sort of mass parade of ships of war going off to fight hadn't happened since Nelson's day. I have always assumed that in the Two World Wars our fighting ships would have just sort of slipped out of harbour discretely, not drawing attention to themselves. I watched the live transmission of the Fleet's sailing in my office with a colleague. Both of us were dumbfounded, incredulous. Still, it seemed unreal. It seemed medieval; it seemed like a pageant; it seemed like something from C. S. Forester's *Hornblower* books… I certainly did feel a twinge of old-fashioned patriotism in the days following the sailing of the fleet. Warships do look pretty dressed with bunting and their crews lining the decks; spring sunshine at Portsmouth makes the sea and ships look very romantic. The Navy is certainly a much more romantic fighting force than the Army or air-force: it is also heavily bound up with great moments in British history.[249]

Though not all observers went into quite so much detail, it is evident within collected responses that the despatch of the task force was frequently associated with a particular

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[248] Summerfield, "The generation of memory".
[249] MO D169, male, born 1949.

sense of British pageantry, identity and history, and foregrounded within popular culture.[250] Strikingly, very few observers were concerned specifically with the controversial sinking of the Argentine crusier, *General Belgrano*.[251] One observer focused instead on the loss of HMS *Sheffield* on 10 May, 1982:

> Yesterday we heard of the sinking of the Argentinian ship, and although one shouldn't most people said that will show them, after all they started it, but today we mourn our own dead and the loss of HMS *Sheffield* and also worry about the wounded… My husband was on the previous HMS *Sheffield* (shiny Sheff as she was known) the plate was all Sheffield steel, she sunk the *Bismarck* and he was on the guns at the time. We went to the launching of this Sheffield in 1971, it was the Duke of Edinburgh's birthday and we all sang Happy Birthday, so we as a family feel the loss today.[252]

This observer was keen to stress the personal connections they had to the British navy as it assumed a critical combat role approaching the islands. Naval battles and losses engendered direct connection to similar experiences in the Second World War. The Navy's ships were often linked to Britain's history and associated with the most well-known symbols of British identity.

Certainly, the fortunes of British forces in the campaign were central aspect of observers' responses as they attempted to keep up to date with events in the theatre. One was distressed as "more planes are being shot down and our own ships are being hit"[253] while another considered the use of otherwise dormant military assets:

> The weapons producers and NATO have had a marvellous time evaluating their latest hardware,

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[250] Paris, *Warrior Nation.*
[251] Indeed, the controversy surrounding its sinking by a Royal Navy submarine became more pronounced in the months and years following the conflict. See: Freedman, *Official History*, 242-251.
[252] MO F193, female, born 1937.
[253] MO C140, female, born 1951.

used in anger for the first time. The weaknesses and unexpected bonuses have shown up clearly. The

Harrier, to name one, can no longer be passed off as a joke aeroplane.[254]

The use of high-profile and technologically advanced weaponry was considered by another observer, though described in a rather more critical and cynical tone:

I have sensed a distinct desire on the part of the Prime Minister, some members of the Cabinet and

the Admiralty in charge to have a 'go' and try their fancy weapons.[255]

During the initial stages of the crisis, the assembly of a naval flotilla in particular elicited invocation of Britain's seafaring past and its historical status as a strong naval power. As the task force approached the islands and combat began in earnest observers became more concerned about the performance of Britain's aeroplanes and fighter pilots,[256] and the advanced technology with which they were associated.[257]

As British forces embarked onto the Falkland Islands, observers instead began to focus on the developing land war. This shift ran parallel to the increasing prominence of the individual personnel who were deployed to the theatre within their responses, particularly the frontline infantrymen who were characterised as bearing the brunt of the conflict and involved most heavily in the fighting. Indeed, this focus, largely at the expense of sailors and reserve troops who faced great risk aboard the Navy's ships, evidenced observers' persistent elevation of the experience of combat as a marker for

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[254] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[255] MO B91, female, born 1930.
[256] Contemporary fascination with aerial combat in the Falklands campaign was often framed by memories of the Battle of Britain and an association with 'The Few'. See: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 273-274; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 125.
[257] For a discussion of aerial technology and its connection with English identity in the twentieth century, see: David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane* (London: Penguin, 2013).

heroism and military identity during the conflict;[258] a trend which persists throughout responses to all directives I have considered.

Observers infrequently discussed the use of tactics or weaponry. Rather they focused on more abstract ideas related to the quality and character of Britain's frontline soldiers. The bravery and dedication that they demonstrated was often linked to a sense of national pride, but also represented a contemporary exposition of a long history of British heroism:

…our young men are still patriotic and brave, ready to defend the honour of the land of their birth...Remembrance has brought down a share of peace, because I realise such things are our heritage. The young men are still the same and I do wish those who are fighting God speed.[259]

The forces deployed to the Falklands embodied an ethic of sacrifice and duty which moved many observers. Another offered a typically emotional response after the conclusion of the conflict:

There was a lump in my throat, but mingled with the feeling of grief for the men that did not return and those that were maimed and injured was a feeling of immense pride. Pride for these men, of all ages who achieved what they did not only against the invaders, but… against the elements, terrain and having to have everything required sent to them from far away. Would that these qualities shown in adversity could also be foremost in everyday life.[260]

Of course, though popular, the sentiment was not hegemonic. Some observers found it difficult to express anything other than sadness at the loss of life experienced in the South Atlantic:

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[258] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.
[259] MO B36, female, born 1914.
[260] MO B55, female, born 1921.

The sadness is, of course, seeing the light of courage in young faces and ending - like innocent lambs to the slaughter. If pushed to self-defence, war must be a last resort and not a first.[261]

Others who did not believe that Britain should use force to retake the islands did not portray the military effort in a positive light. One suggested that "the response of the great majority of people in Britain indicates a thirst for a glorious victory, perhaps because of our recent poor showing in football."[262] However, very few were critical in this regard. Among the responses in which combat or the military were discussed, most suggested that – despite the tragic loss of life involved in a military campaign – the sailors and, latterly, soldiers and pilots deployed to the Falklands had exhibited remarkable heroism.

The defeat of the Argentines reinforced a sense of vindication and triumph among observers, with returning soldiers celebrated as deserving victors. For one, watching the victory parade held in October 1982 "was most stirring and one can imagine the atmosphere along the actual route of the procession."[263] Another stated; "certainly the Forces deserved to be acclaimed and feted."[264] One observer suggested further that the parade was a worthy celebration of Britain's heroic veterans, but that she and her friends had been "disgusted that arrangements were not made for the wounded to be in it. They… were the real heroes."[265] The notion that returning soldiers had demonstrated their heroic character and deserved national recognition was not challenged, yet such responses show how observers were not necessarily willing to condone or support 'official' commemorations. Indeed, as I argue shortly, they often fully supported the campaign and the military, contrasting this explicitly with a much more critical or sceptical view of

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[261] MO A21, female, born 1931.
[262] MO C142, male, born 1930.
[263] MO C134, female, born 1932.
[264] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[265] MO F194, female, born 1918.

government and political leaders. The absence of disabled veterans within the victory parade (something which caused a minor national controversy at the time)[266] was identified and criticised, revealing a more personal and emotional sympathy that existed alongside a celebration of martial prowess and victory. Observers did not consider military personnel to be a wing of the state or a tool for the government to exploit; in some cases they were identified in opposition to political power.

Thus, observers viewed Britain's military as representative of the nation as well as the state. Victory in the Falklands had been won by Britain, not the British government. Certainly, the conflict expunged any sense that Britain's forces were not up to the task, or had suffered shame or embarrassment. Indeed, as one observer wrote after the conflict, victory had meant that "The Prestige of the UK has now risen throughout the world."[267]

Anxieties over the outcome or human cost of the conflict were replaced as the military returned triumphant. The account of one observer is demonstrative. During the initial fighting on the islands pride and patriotism mixed with concern for the wellbeing of soldiers:

> As my husband is an Ex Royal Navy man, I do share with him very patriotic views, and of course at the present time I am very proud of our boys out there, they have done a grand job and I hope and pray that we can recapture the Falklands. But the cost in human life is a very high price if this is what we have to pay. Many a mum, dad, wife etc. is I expect wondering at the present if their own dear one is safe.[268]

For the same observer, all that seemed left to debate after the forces' return was how best to accommodate the military triumph achieved in the South Atlantic:

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[266] Mark Townsend, "The hardest fight of all for a Falklands hero", *The Guardian,* 2007. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jan/14/falklands.world (Accessed 18-05-2018).
[267] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[268] MO F193, female, born 1937.

I listened to the Falklands Service and I am afraid I agree with the critics that the fact that we were victorious is something to be proud of… and the efforts of the young men and women who risk their lives in our defence is something to be proud of an applauded.[269]

Likewise, one observer described how "most people feel proud to be British at this time, and feel we still make the best fighting force in the world."[270] For another, victory in the Falklands had shown the continuing effectiveness of Britain's military:

The military angle is interesting. None of our troops are old enough to have seen this kind of action...The troops on both sides were new to real war, but the value of British training and discipline was obvious… The Junta clearly made a monumental error when they apparently thought we wouldn't fight back, further compounded by the assessment that we couldn't win.[271]

For these observers, the despatch of naval and ground forces, and the bravery and competency of the soldiers who fought on land, were thought to demonstrate a direct link between Britain's contemporary use of force and a celebrated martial identity. The military was in this sense, not only emblematic of a broadly justified conflict in the south Atlantic but also represented the most recent exposition of a continuing military tradition. For one observer the Falklands War represented a connection between past and present which recalled Britain's history as an imperial power:

Our Empire seemed as far away as the moon and stars. Now most of our Empire has gone, the moon and stars are nearer to us today. Here we are fighting, for what at a hasty glance, seems to be a little group of islands... I am in the evening of my days but I am back in that little village church school,

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[269] MO F193, female, born 1937.
[270] MO B43, male, born 1956.
[271] MO B83, female, born 1944.

singing 'Land of our birth, our faith, our pride, for whose dear sake our fathers died, O, Motherland,

we pledge to thee, head, heart, and hand through years to be.[272]

History and identity, though rarely linked to Empire so explicitly, were important for those attempting to understand the campaign itself. Few observers went into detail about the weapons or tactics deployed in the Falkland Islands. Most were instead emotionally invested in abstract ideas of the quality and character of military personnel; bravery, determination, resilience, strength. They embodied not only the legitimate victory won against Argentina, but also the legitimacy and heroism of military service itself. Their efforts represented an experience that was unique for Britain and distinguished a sense of martial superiority.

It is important to note however, that observers imagined the conflict in its totality and appear to have refocused their attentions as events in the south Atlantic unfolded. During the initial despatch of the task force, several observers were keen to stress Britain's identity as a sea power. The departure of ships from Britain conjured images of a mythic past which, for an older generation, included not only the Second World War but also an idea of Britain's global, imperial past. However, the conflict ended as a ground war and observers increasingly wrote about it as such, moving emphasis from ships and the navy, to the army and the central figure of the infantry soldier. This shift of focus *from* sea power has not altered since within observers' collected responses as British forces have continued to be deployed primarily on land.

The nature of the combat, its imagination rooted in the bravery and heroism of frontline troops, and Britain's ultimate triumph was received with pride by most of the observers who wrote about combat and the military specifically. Though, several suggested that the war represented a lamentable loss of life – or even a waste - most

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[272] MO B36, female, born 1914.

described Britain's military involvement in the war as part of a wider story of military legitimacy; both that Britain remained a force for good, and that military service itself was legitimate and deserving of respect and appreciation. The circumstances of the Falklands War engendered a reconstruction of British identity in which ground warfare and a personal, sympathetic and individualistic narrative of soldierly heroism and triumph were particularly important. Even among those who were most critical of Britain's campaign to retake the Islands by force, very few challenged this pervasive belief in the heightened status of military personnel and a construction of masculine military heroism.[273]

Leaders, Leadership and Margaret Thatcher

Observers considered the Falklands crisis in light of Britain's contemporary political leadership and individual leaders. While much of this discourse was dominated by the incumbent government, focused primarily on the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, observers did attempt to place Britain's use of force in 1982 within the wider political context.

Indeed, frequently observers suggested that the British state, and in particular the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, had been at fault in failing to anticipate Argentina's occupation of the islands.[274] Individuals who did not fully support a military campaign to retake the islands were keen to stress that the conflict had been the result of political failure, and that the government's response was similarly misguided. They suggested that the situation in the South Atlantic had been "badly handled",[275] "mishandled",[276] or that

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[273] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

[274] This was an important aspect of the contemporary political debate after the immediate occupation. For a more detailed discussion, see: Boyce, *The Falklands War,* 36-39.

[275] MO A23, female, born 1912.

"we should never have got into this position."[277] Others described their "tired dismay over the entire pantomime"[278] and that blame for the outbreak of war must be placed with a British government which "did not take him [Argentine President, Leopoldo Galtieri] seriously."[279]

Indeed, even among observers who supported a military response the idea that the British state was at least partially to blame for the outbreak of war was a popular one. One observer wrote how the British "had little choice but to act"[280] militarily but went on to write, "was it mishandled from the start? I think quite honestly, yes. It seems as if we were treating the situation as a problem which would go away if we ignored it."[281] Similarly another observer wrote how "the situation was mishandled before the crisis started… [but] we should act, by taking the Falklands back by force if necessary."[282]

Observers mostly believed that the British were right to defend themselves, their territory or subjects once the Argentines had occupied the islands but suggested that the British government had not done enough to avert such aggression. One described how "many people, including myself, feel that the government acted rather belatedly if they did indeed know of Argentina's intentions well before April"[283] while another wrote in greater detail:

> Once the Argentinians invaded the Falkland Islands I think the only action the government could take was to send out troops. However, from the information we have been told I certainly think the whole affair was mishandled… Why, when there have been 'signs' of an invasion for so many years have not any governments brought the problem into the open and tried to sort it out? I can

[276] MO B84, female, born 1921.
[277] MO B91, female, born 1930.
[278] MO F210, female, born 1925.
[279] MO B45, female, born 1925.
[280] MO C138, female, born 1944.
[281] MO C138, female, born 1944.
[282] MO C125, male, born 1916.
[283] MO B89, female, born 1931.

understand why a government wants to keep a territory that may be beneficial to it in the future but I do not understand why they ignore it until it is too late and lives are lost.[284]

Another observer blamed the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, for the initial failure in leadership. Having now resigned, the government could concentrate on pursuing a legitimate cause:

Apart from thinking that the whole issue should never have been allowed to reach this point, and agreeing with the resignation of Lord Carrington because of this… I feel there is [now] more chance of a threat to world peace if we do not act than if we do.[285]

Poor leadership marked the eruption of a crisis in the South Atlantic. The inability of the government to show Argentina that the Falklands Islands would be defended had led to a situation in which they now had to be retaken. The minority of observers who rejected using force to reclaim the islands were naturally critical of Foreign Office failures, yet even among the greater number who supported a military campaign the idea that political forces could be apportioned blame was also popular. Failure to head off the war in the first place was not considered to be a *British* fault, rather it could be more narrowly attributed to a political elite and, in some cases, a single person in Carrington. This narrative was similar in nature to the 'guilty men'[286] thesis which observers frequently ascribed to when referring to Britain's entry into the Second World War.

As the Thatcher government responded to the Argentinian occupation, and the task force departed for the islands, observers considered the role assumed by the Prime Minister. While some did discuss in passing other figures like Lord Carrington, or

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[284] MO C109, female, born 1949.
[285] MO B35, female, born 1941.
[286] See: Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 191-199.

prominent parliamentary opponents like Tony Benn or Tam Dalyell, most focused solely on Thatcher as leader of the government and as a figurehead for Britain internationally, setting a trend among all collected responses considered in this research in associating political leadership and decision-making specifically with the office of the Prime Minster.

The eruption of the Falklands crisis, and a belief on the part of most observers that it was right to retake the islands by force, mixed uneasily with diverging and often highly charged political views on Margaret Thatcher's government. After all, she had been Prime Minister for nearly three years by the time observers began writing about the Falklands War,[287] thus what observers submitted in 1982 was marked by a great deal of variation and complexity. Some clearly felt that the conflict was evidence of the Thatcher government's warlike, aggressive and divisive politics. Others felt the conflict was an exposition of the government's strength and determination. In both cases the Prime Minister became an embodiment of the British state or policy in the crisis and subsequent military conflict.

Individuals who rejected the legitimacy of the war were often forthright in what they wrote in this regard, representing Thatcher's role in the crisis as cynical and opportunistic:

> The government have managed to change the headlines from mass unemployment which is still with us, to mass slaughter of human beings - no matter what race. I am for peace and diplomatic discussion, not at the point of a gun.[288]

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[287] For a consideration of the Falklands War within Thatcher's political career and ideological position, see: Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, 134-153. For a consideration of Thatcher's interpretation of the conflict, and the placement of the war within a specific political and historical narrative, see: Noakes, *War and the British*; Foster, *Fighting Fictions*; Barnett, *Iron Britannia*.

[288] MO B68, female, born 1931.

...the overriding motive, is that a show of British force will (a) unite the nation, or at any rate the greater part of it, and obliterate from the minds of the great majority of people the ineptitude of the government in permitting the situation to reach crisis point; and (b) enable the P.M. to project herself as a second Boadicea or a female Winston Churchill, the achievement of which will win more votes than any other issue.[289]

The point was further reinforced by another observer, writing after the conclusion of the conflict, who explicitly contrasted political failure and the sense of heroism and duty that led ordinary people into the armed forces:

Thatcher's bloody war proved only one thing… that good and brave men have to do as they are told once the 'leaders' decide to avenge, and it is sad that such brave courageous individuals are misled about what true heroism is.[290]

Other observers were however, less critical and were often quite clear that the conflict represented a boon for the Thatcher government domestically. They wrote variously that "Mrs Thatcher's popularity has increased"[291] and that "support for the government has, if anything, grown as the war has progressed."[292] Several suggested further that such a forceful and righteous reaction to the Argentine occupation was directly attributable to the quality and character of the Prime Minister, and that her strong leadership had fostered a sense of national unity, reflected through support in Parliament:

We fortunately have a prime minister that doesn't seem to be falling apart with the difficult task that she is facing, and at least the majority of all parties are with her on this.[293]

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[289] MO C142, male, born 1930.
[290] MO A21, female, born 1931.
[291] MO B36, female, born 1914.
[292] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[293] MO B53, female, born 1926.

There is no doubt at all that, at present, the majority support both the stand the Government has taken and the military effort which is backing it up.[294]

Evidently, for observers who were both critical and supportive of the campaign, Thatcher represented an embodiment of Britain's position in the conflict, be it an unwarranted reaction or a determined and justified defence. Perspectives on her handling of the crisis seemed, for some at least, to offer clear evidence of the substance and style of her leadership itself.

Indeed, some observers bought heavily into Thatcher's own interpretation of a 'Falklands Factor' in which the resolve and success demonstrated in the South Atlantic had begun a reversal of Britain's post war decline.[295] For one observer "a new feeling of pride and togetherness became apparent in the country"[296] while for another "people seem to be taking extra pride from the fact that our servicemen are capable of putting up a good show."[297] The effect of the war on domestic society was even noticeable in the work place:

Last Sunday I watched on TV the return of the Canberra [as] I think most people did, it is amazing the amount of public interest that is around at the present time, if only this spirit could somehow be around all the time…The response [at work] was superb no one refused to work extra time, suppliers were very co-operative with delivery. Some people came back from holidays early as their expertise was required.[298]

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[294] MO D157, male, born 1918.

[295] See, Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to Conservative Rally at Cheltenham", July 1983. Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Available online at: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104989.

[296] MO B55, female, born 1921.

[297] MO D157, male, born 1918.

[298] MO F193, female, born 1937.

However, perhaps most strikingly given Thatcher's close association with the conflict in the following decades, several observers were conspicuously lukewarm about Thatcher's personality, or her government's record, and sought to detach her leadership from a cause that was considered to be justified but *national* in nature. One observer, after having decried the protests of Tony Benn and Judith Hart in attempting to obstruct a legitimate effort to retake the islands, was also critical of Thatcher's role in the military effort; "I feel Margaret Thatcher had to save her face and send troops in."[299] Similarly, the pride expressed by another observer on seeing the return of victorious British soldiers was accompanied by a statement that "I, like them [the observer's friends], did not approve of Mrs Thatcher being there with the Mayor [at the victory parade]".[300]

Likewise, some believed that the Thatcher government was seeking to make political capital out of a war which, though justified had little to do with her. One suggested sardonically that "it is a known tactic for a government to divert attention away from problems at home – jokes were heard as to whether Mrs Thatcher had to let things get this far for the same reason."[301] Others were particularly cynical about Thatcher's connection to and interpretation of the conflict:

> I feel that military action will prove to the rest of the world that we are not just going to be sat on and that we will react with or without the support of our neighbours and allies... I feel that domestic policy is affected by the fact that the Tory government can now be seen to be strong and decisive, although the situation was mishandled in the beginning, if 'victory' ensues then this will be forgotten and the Tories will win the next election.[302]

Another observer concurred, writing after the conflict:

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[299] MO C140, female, born 1951.
[300] MO F194, female, born 1918.
[301] MO B70, female, born 1950.
[302] MO C138, female, born 1944.

> With hindsight, I suppose the outcome was successful; however, the conflict led directly, I am convinced, to the rehabilitation of Margaret Thatcher, who had been struggling to maintain popularity before it happened. She rode on the back of the Falklands conflict until the end of her premiership, and went on to do untold damage to this country.[303]

Here, the idea that the Prime Minister embodied a national spirit, or could take personal credit for Britain's victory over Argentina, was not entertained. The conflict was considered by these observers to be a cause that was larger than the premiership of Margaret Thatcher and her apparent efforts to appropriate the legacy of the war were criticised by individuals who otherwise supported it. While leadership was frequently used as important signifier of Britain's identity in the Falklands War, some observers instead described Prime Ministerial leadership to have been essentially incidental, drawing a sharp distinction between political power and policy on the one hand, and a national struggle – embodied more authentically by the travails of the armed forces – on the other.

Observers were then, willing to criticise political leaders despite essentially agreeing with their positions and policies. They were willing in 1982 – as in later cases – to apportion blame for the eruption of a lamentable conflict to elements of the British state. In addition to vague allusions to a 'mishandled' crisis, several observers were keen to point out that the necessary deployment of the British military had resulted from a signal failure to Argentina over the status of the islands, and seemed to suggest that Britain had appeased the Junta before having to pay the price; a narrative seemingly

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[303] MO F3409, female, born 1947.

closely aligned to a pervasive belief in the abject failure of Britain's appeasement of Nazi Germany.[304]

However, it is not the aim of this research to assess the extent to which the Falklands War impacted on the popularity of political elites, the government or Margaret Thatcher within observers' responses. Evidently, some felt strongly that Thatcher was responsible for the campaign, an association which could be positive or negative depending on broader perspectives on its legitimacy. I do suggest however that these responses show how government or party politics were subordinate within responses to a broader conception of the Falklands War as one involving the British *nation*. While Thatcher was in some cases thought to personally embody the identity of the nation, in other cases observers criticised her 'appropriation' of an otherwise justified use of British force. The prospect of military conflict led observers to discuss it as a British experience rather than simply a political decision.

This delineation of political leadership within a broader interpretation of national experience meant that official failure or party politics in the present could be separated from broader constructions of Britain as a military force for good. Observers mostly supported the government's policy but saw the war as part of a national story, and were more ambivalent about crediting political leaders who were a smaller, more transient part of a broader historical narrative. In later conflicts, particularly the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was roundly criticised within responses, this identification of political failure helped observers to preserve and reinforce a broader belief in the legitimacy of British military force, and Britain's historic identity as a force for good, as blame for the conflict could be placed squarely with politicians and leaders in the present.

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[304] Connelly, *We Can Take It!,* 269-271; Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 188-217.

The UN, USA and Europe

As Philip Towle has shown, members of the British public do not lack sophisticated knowledge about international affairs and are capable of assessing the ramifications of diplomatic crises.[305] Observers were evidently aware of the prevailing international context in 1982, including knowledge of Britain's place within the nuclear security struggle. Yet observers were generally quick to identify the extraneous nature of the Falklands crisis in relation to the wider Cold War. The sense that the crisis may represent something potentially escalatory was evident in only one response:

> That we are now on the brink of war is not totally surprising. There has been an increasing feeling over the last two years that the world was on the brink of something… What is surprising is the direction from which the threat has come: not Europe or the Middle East, but the South Atlantic.[306]

Writing after its conclusion, another observer instead identified the contained and conventional nature of the war with reference to its implications for Britain's future security; "The view from many quarters as a result of the crisis has been agreement that Britain does not need nuclear weapons and defence spending should go on what we are so clearly using against the Argentinians now."[307] In sharp contrast to the later Gulf War, observers were generally not worried that a war in the South Atlantic could trigger a regional or global disaster, despite its emergence during a period of heightening international tension. Instead, observers maintained a more narrow diplomatic focus centred on Britain's relationship with the United Nations, its allies in America and Europe, and of course, its enemy, Argentina.

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[305] Towle, *Going to War*, 132-141.
[306] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[307] MO B70, female, born 1950.

The war elicited strongly-held views on the nature of diplomacy and the need for Britain and Argentina to avoid war through cooperation. Observers desired a strong United Nations, capable of enforcing negotiation between belligerent states. They argued that "the United Nations should have stepped in and forced (peacefully) the invaders to withdraw",[308] that "we should have immediately called in the UN",[309] and that "I would like to see an international peace keeping force which has more power than the present UN forces… [able] to produce a military force equal to or greater than any aggressors."[310]

Frequently observers described the United Nations as a legitimate source of resolution for disputes such as that over the Falkland Islands. Some who rejected the justification for a military response were eager to suggest that the UN ought to provide an alternative diplomatic route. Among supporters of Britain's position, it was assumed that the United Nations could provide a more forceful rebuttal to the Argentine 'aggressors'.

For others however, the failure to resolve the crisis before a resort to force demonstrated the weakness of the United Nations as a platform for settling international disputes. Many questioned the effectiveness of an institution that had seemed to permit the occupation of the islands in the first place, and then the despatch of the naval task force after:

> Why, oh why, hasn't the UN Secretary General done something open and positive to help keep the peace?[311]

> The UN must find ways to cope. When this debacle is over the UN must debate.[312]

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[308] MO B68, female, born 1931.
[309] MO F210, female, born 1925.
[310] MO C143, female, born 1932.
[311] MO B91, female, born 1930.
[312] MO B84, female, born 1921.

> The ineffectuality of the United Nations [was demonstrated by the failure] to bring about a peaceful settlement when faced with two countries absolutely adamant that both of them are in the right.[313]

Others drew on their knowledge of the League of Nations, connecting present to past through an articulation of failed multilateralism and international gridlock:

> The status of the United Nations as a war-averting force has now diminished to that of the League in the 'thirties.[314]

Among observers who supported Britain's Falklands campaign, some were concerned with the perceived failure of international arbitration. They assumed that the legitimacy of Britain's position would have been reflected through the institutions of the UN and that Britain ought to have avoided acting alone:

> Whatever happened to the United Nations, or our dream of a United Nations? It seems that they have very little effect as it actually comes to it. After all, if Argentina won't comply with UN resolutions then I feel they should not belong and should be ostracised by the other nations.[315]

Likewise, for another observer, the Argentine occupation of the islands demonstrated the need for multilateral security that could head off such aggression:

> …there must be a civilised and sensible way of not allowing any one country to decide that another territory belongs to them and on their own accord without prior application or discussion walk in and take over... The United Nations would be the obvious body to approach with grievances of this kind, although they do not seem to have been able to assert any great authority when disputes of this

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[313] MO B45, female, born 1925.
[314] MO C142, male, born 1930.
[315] MO C138, female, born 1944.

nature arise, sometimes seeming inadequate and causing more aggravation than solution, and leaving matters in a more fragile state.[316]

At the most basic level, all observers who wrote about the United Nations were universally supportive of an international body capable of resolving conflicts before its parties resorted to force. Certainly, no observers argued that the UN ought to be abandoned, or that Britain ought to leave it. Instead many lamented failure to resolve the Falklands crisis without resort to force which further exposed its weakness.

However, where some assumed that a 'strong' UN would halt British overreaction or aggression and thereby constrain the ability of the British state to pursue an unjustified conflict, others assumed that it would simply have saved the British from having to remove the Argentines themselves. Observers rarely sought to explain whether the use of force could be sanctioned within international law, and certainly no observers explicitly based their judgements on the campaign's legitimacy by referring to its 'legality' in this sense. Instead, though observers were concerned with ideas of multilateral security and peaceful resolution, what they wrote in this regard reinforces a wider finding that their perspectives on Britain's role in the conflict, and its justification or legitimacy, were understood through construction of Britain's national identity. They were, on the whole, more concerned with establishing whether the campaign could be considered defensive in nature – whether it could be incorporated directly within a broader narrative of British resistance to expansionary aggression – rather than whether Argentina's occupation contravened, for example, the Charter of the United Nations.

Few observers discussed allied states or nations within their responses, perhaps reflecting the bi-lateral nature of the conflict. Indeed, only five observers wrote in detail about Britain's allies in 1982. They suggested that Britain ought to look to its allies in

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[316] MO B53, female, born 1926.

Europe and America, but that their neutrality – most obviously realised by US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig's shuttle diplomacy – was troubling when the legitimacy of Britain's position seemed so obvious:

> The US incurred some condemnation during its 'even handed' phase. Some people thought Haig's attempts were 'a cheek', especially when the results appeared to be little more than the Argentinians allowing us a token presence under their flag. As of old, the messenger was blamed for the content of the missive. With the recent US announcement backing UK came the natural 'about time, too' reaction.[317]

> Many people feel also it [a British military campaign] will show who we can trust in the EEC and if the USA will help, and how far they will go in talk and action… They [the USA] sit on the fence and try and stay on both sides, and have never learned, that you have to have conviction of right and wrong at the start and not wait to see.[318]

For these observers the legitimacy of Britain's military effort to retake the Falkland Islands was not in doubt, even when it seemed that close allies held reservations or were committed to a diplomatic resolution. Britain could not afford to 'sit on the fence'. American inaction in the current crisis was not only lamentable, but evident of an historical difference between allies. Observers were referring implicitly to the United States entry into the world wars in 1917 and 1941. In suggesting that American 'neutrality' could be understood as part of a specific historical narrative, observers were prompted to rehabilitate an interpretation of British involvement in World War Two that was unique by virtue of having been "the only nation to have been in from first to last."[319] The process of othering that these observers engaged in did not rest solely on

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[317] MO D157, male, born 1918.
[318] MO B43, male, born 1956.
[319] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 1

contemporary circumstance, but involved the re-invocation of popular memories that could give meaning – over a much longer time period – to historical differences in national identity, not simply differences in policy or context.

For another observer, Britain's principled lone stand was articulated in contrast to the lack of commitment exhibited by European partners:

> I think that as we decided to send our troops and stand up to Argentina then the EEC and other countries should stand with us. If they had been put in our position I can only assume they would have done the same. I also think they have no right to call for a ceasefire now and for our troops to be withdrawn as if they had taken stronger sanctions with Argentina we might not have to have taken invasion action.[320]

Again, invocation of 'the last war' clarified the apparent hypocrisy of European allies for another observer:

> When it comes down to self-interest our allies in the EEC certainly showed a remarkable lack of support for us, a good many of whom would not be free to decide anything if it had not been for our effects in the last war. So much for a United Europe. Their showing on the issue will give a fillip to the anti-marketers, I fear.[321]

For another observer, comparison between Douglas Haig and Neville Chamberlain associated American policy with an enduring belief in the failure of appeasement and the "myth of Munich".[322] Though most observers who discussed the diplomatic context did not embed their discussions quite so heavily in memories of the Second World War, the account is again instructive in showing how British identity – rooted in a celebrated and

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[320] MO C140, female, born 1951.
[321] MO B45, female, born 1925.
[322] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 217.

legitimate 'lone stand' in 1940 – could be reconstructed more fundamentally as observers sought to make sense of the contemporary Falklands crisis:

> Mr Haig's shuffling appears to be as much use as Mr Chamberlain's bit of paper. And note how the USA is sitting on the fence as they did at the beginning of both World Wars!.. The EEC, devious as ever, used the fact that it was supporting us to weedle better farm prices out of us (I wonder how the French would react if someone invaded Sardinia? (*sic*)… The Irish behaved exactly as they did in World War II and, really, no-one expected them to change.[323]

Observers made sense of the contemporary period, and the diplomatic relationship with other allied states, by drawing on a broader narrative of British identity. Present circumstances, including the prevailing international and diplomatic context, could be clarified and better understood when compared to familiar and assured narratives of British experience in the Second World War. During the Falklands campaign – unlike observers' responses to British involvement in later conflicts – neutrality, British isolation and 1940 were events and ideas that seemed to retain an explanatory power over the present and affirm the legitimacy of Britain's position. These observers interpreted the contemporary context in a manner which foregrounded the "'big facts'"[324] of 1940, providing space in which Britain's distinguished lone resistance in Europe could be re-invoked and reinforced. Yet of course, few observers discussed the international diplomatic context directly, at least when compared to those discussing the legitimacy of the British response, or the nature of the opposing regime. While this process of othering of allied nations prompted observers to focus on Britain's celebrated 'lone stand', it is important to note that it was not as salient a feature of their responses as narratives related

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[323] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[324] Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 4.

to German aggression in the later 1930s, the brutal tyranny of the Nazis and Adolf Hitler specifically, or the apparent failure of Britain's policy of appeasement.

Similarly, later involvement in multi-national, US-led coalitions, engendered within observers responses a re-invocation of Britain's morally secure and celebrated resistance to Nazi Germany in order to clarify contemporary circumstances, yet they rarely drew on a narrative of celebrated *lone* resistance. These particular aspects of 1940 lost the specific relevance within later responses that they had within those written in 1982. Though memories of Britain's Second World War were present across Britain's recent wars, the ways in which they were articulated and the specific aspects that were drawn upon varied according the circumstances of the present that they were mobilised to help explain.

The Enemy Other: Galtieri's Argentina

Observers writing about the Falklands War were eager to represent Britain's enemy in the conflict. The 'othering' of the Argentinian regime was important for a cohort of observers who sought to describe the brutal and dictatorial nature of the Argentine Junta as alien to Britain. Yet how much observers knew about the Junta or its domestic policies is not clear; certainly no observers described the recent history of Argentina in detail, or the actions of its government before the Falklands crisis within the wider region or world. Instead, similarly to what they wrote about the islands themselves, observers were more confident and assured about the nature of the regime they faced when it could be

understood by direct comparison with more familiar enemies. Nazi Germany and the ubiquitous figure of Adolf Hitler often served as a frame of reference in this regard.[325]

Indeed, for supporters of Britain's Falklands campaign, the identification of the Junta as a particularly brutal, dictatorial or fascistic one seemed to lend more weight to the argument for a forceful military reaction to the Islands' occupation; it was incumbent on the British to respond to "a regime as nasty as the Argentinian Junta."[326] In some cases observers associated the Falklands campaign with a broader, British resistance to dictatorship. Britain was thought to be not only defending itself or its subjects, but also continuing a tradition of helping to "clear the world of power minded dictators."[327] Similarly, another observer described how the crisis over the Falkland Islands also involved the status of the Argentine government and its perceived ideology:

> I do not agree with the Argentinian dictatorship and all my friends and relatives agree with this. They are downright killers and had no right to walk in and take over the Falklands Island people... I think the next problem is trying to sort the Argentinians government out now so that a settlement can be achieved.[328]

Indeed, for one observer, the ideological position of the Argentine Junta helped to determine the legitimacy of the British campaign:

> Had Argentina been a more progressive, humanitarian regime, one wouldn't have minded in the least their taking of the Falklands over (Had they been more progressive etc. I suppose they wouldn't have wanted to take the Falklands anyway).[329]

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[325] For a consideration of the importance of Hitler's persona within popular memory of Britain's Second World War, and his persistent re-emergence within later conflicts, see: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.
[326] MO B83, female, born 1944.
[327] MO B66, female, born 1930.
[328] MO C140, female, born 1951.
[329] MO D169, male, born 1949.

Observers, particularly those among the majority who reasoned that Britain's campaign was justified, articulated a narrow and specific representation of the enemy, one marked out by its tyranny, dictatorship, brutality and illegitimacy. Such ideas were of course, alien to British moderation, freedom and democracy; their emphasis further aided in the construction of sense of British national identity by contrast. The specific circumstances of the Islands' occupation prompted observers to identify a hostile Other against which British traits, characteristics or values could be asserted.

Observers were able to draw such a concise representation of the Argentinian Junta, with little empirical evidence or discussion of its actions, by embedding their discussion in popular memories of enemies that were thought to be similar. Direct comparison with Adolf Hitler and the Nazis clarified what observers thought about Galtieri and the Junta by association. One typified the connection, writing:

> We can't leave them [the Falkland Islanders] to the mercies of a regime in whose country thousands of people just "disappear" - this is reminiscent of Nazi Germany. I can imagine how their hearts sank when they were invaded - once again reminiscent of the Channel Islanders witnessing their invasion by the Nazis.[330]

As I have shown above within the discussion of legitimacy, observers persistently saw a connection between the contemporary conflict and British entry into the Second World War. An important aspect of this connection was the re-invocation of popular memories of Nazi aggression and Brutality, and the ubiquitous figure of Adolf Hitler as a personification of this evil.[331] Likewise, observers were often particularly concerned by

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[330] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[331] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.

"a fascist regime ruling the Argentinians",[332] or a regime bearing "all the Fascist hallmarks".[333] While the focus on Adolf Hitler as a sort of shorthand for dictatorship, evil or illegitimacy was a feature of later responses, it is evident that observers writing in 1982 were more likely to stress the 'fascistic' nature of the Argentine regime in particular. Seemingly, for a generation much closer to the Second World War, conflict was understood by referring more explicitly to ideology and fascism rather than (as in later conflicts in Iraq and the Balkans) the evil embodied by dictators themselves.. Observers responses written in 1982 show the extent to which, as Dan Stone has argued, popular memories of Britain's Second World War were more heavily rooted in a broad anti-fascist consensus that has become more open to revision following the end of the Cold War.[334]

Yet invocations of these memories also demonstrate the extent to which observers were reconstructing and reaffirming a wider narrative of British identity. As in later conflicts in Iraq and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, contemporary circumstances shaped the reconstruction of a *specific* interpretation of Britain's past and its identity. The confrontation of military dictatorship, with a leader who could be identified as a figurehead of the regime or a personification of its policies and ideology, meant allusions to Nazism and Adolf Hitler retained an explanatory power, and were thus themselves re-invoked as part of a much broader history in which Britain was thought to be tolerant, moderate, democratic and morally superior by contrast. A specific understanding of Britain's role as a force for good in World War Two was given a new utility as observers sought to understand the present conflict. In attempting to characterise the difference between Britain and Argentina, they contributed to the reconstructions of a specific

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[332] MO B70, female, born 1950.
[333] MO B36, female, born 1914.
[334] Stone, *Goodbye to all That?*

narrative of British identity based on continued opposition and resistance to aggressive, dictatorial Others.

Conclusions

What observers wrote about Britain's involvement in the Falklands War was not homogenous or universal, but was instead complex, individual and subjective. However, within this complexity there were recurring themes and particular ideas which were apparent. At the most basic level it is evident that most observers were aware of the specific circumstances and context of the Falklands crisis, and that they had access to enough information to make specific judgements about Britain's position and government policy. Observers knew that the conflict was fought over British territorial possessions in the South Atlantic, that the British despatched a task force, and that the British won a military victory on the islands. The perceived circumstances of the war, like all cases I consider in this research, were crucial in determining what observers wrote about British involvement within them, and what they reflected about Britain as a nation.

Observers were though, concerned with evaluating what the conflict reflected about Britain and its identity. Confronted with the likelihood of military action, they were keen to assess the moral and political legitimacy of Britain's involvement. This was articulated with greater clarity by observers, at least when compared to later conflicts in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Observers who discussed the Falklands War were confident in asserting that the British campaign was right or wrong and within this comparatively polarised discourse, most believed Britain was justified in retaking the Falkland Islands by force. This contrasts the later invasion of Iraq which was similarly polarised in the sense that most observers who wrote about it articulated clear conclusions on its

legitimacy, but was widely thought to be an illegitimate and aggressive use of military force.

Though what observers wrote consistently varied, it is evident that what they thought about the campaign's legitimacy derived from a discussion of *defence*. For those who supported the British response, invocations of German expansionism and British appeasement lent weight to a notion that Britain was once more resisting the illegitimate ambitions of a dictatorship. For the significant minority of observers who objected to the conflict, the war was rarely linked to any broader pacifist beliefs; these individuals were mostly shocked by the apparent jingoism within government and the country at large, and a preference for military violence when diplomacy remained an option. They did not suggest that military action itself was illegitimate, simply that it was illegitimate *in this case*. Thus, despite reaching a much different conclusion on the nature of the Falklands campaign – often explicitly identifying themselves as part of a critical minority – they too articulated their perspectives by focusing on what the conflict revealed about Britain. They were similarly interested in defence and aggression, characterising Britain's response to the crisis as overly aggressive and militaristic; a narrative foregrounded in some cases by invocation of the futility of the First World War. Such ideas were however, within the context of observers' collected responses, much less frequent than a more persistent, direct connection with the perceived legitimacy and morality of Britain's Second World War.

Further, it is striking to note how few observers foregrounded their representations of the Argentine occupation as an attack on the Islanders themselves as opposed to an attack on *Britain*. Observers understood the crisis without detailed knowledge of the history of the islands, the nature or recent history of the Junta or its claim to the Islands' sovereignty. They made sense of it by referring to it as a national experience that could

not be reduced to political decisions. Despite engendering divergent opinions on its legitimacy, the Falklands War was approached by observers as part of a broader national story and was made sense of by considering what it meant for Britain. The Islanders were brought into view for observers by the prospect of military conflict. A characterisation of primitive and tranquil island life suggested that they were deserving of protection, but also revealed Britain's contemporary identity as a modern, powerful actor. Observers emphasised the 'Britishness' of the Islanders, but they were simultaneously thought to be other.

As I have shown throughout this chapter, observers engaged in constructing broader narratives of identity which necessarily involved the re-invocation of certain popular memories. Naturally contemporary circumstances affected what observers were able to write about Britain's involvement in military conflict, yet those circumstances were frequently understood by association with particular memories which gave them meaning. For example, a widespread belief in the heroism of Britain's victorious soldiers was of course prompted by the military victory achieved in the South Atlantic, but was understood as part of *Britain's* military tradition and identity. Observers saw the soldiers who fought in the Falklands War as an embodiment of the nation and its military tradition, whose actions were thought to have heightened British prestige and represented a modern-day expression of a much older, historical identity. The conflict gave observers opportunity to reflect Britain's history as a military power, and in most cases, to reaffirm the legitimacy of British military service itself, further distinguishing a sense of unique national community.

Primarily however, observers engaged in persistent reconstruction of the morally secure, justified defence against the aggression of Nazi Germany. Indeed, the cohort of observers writing about the Falklands War were often old enough to draw on personal

memories of World War Two, yet such recollections were figured by an overarching popular understanding of shared, *British* experience.[335] Britain's road to World War Two - the events leading up to the conflict, focused on the legitimacy of resisting the aggressive expansionism of Nazi Germany and the perceived failure of appeasement - were aspects that were particularly important. Their re-invocation was driven by the need on the part of observers to explain the contemporary legitimacy of Britain's Falklands campaign. The frequency in which these events were invoked demonstrates the extent to which the *origin* of Britain's Second World War represents an object of historical memory which demands its own appraisal.[336] Likewise, but with less frequency, the bilateral nature of the Falklands conflict, and a perception that American and European allies were not fully supportive of the British position, prompted some observers to recall Britain's 'lone stand' in 1940. Isolation and allied neutrality could be explained as virtues by direct association with the Second World War, drawing on a myth of British participation that "deserved the applause of the world because it was the only nation to have been in from first to last."[337]

Ultimately I argue here that observers mostly conceived of the Falklands War as a legitimate conflict, but were particularly clear and confident about this representation because it could be incorporated within a morally secure and well understand narrative of historical identity. Though observers were focused primarily on explaining the circumstances of the present, they did so by presenting them as part of a broader story, thereby recovering a narrative of national experience in the past. Conflict in the present offered an opportunity and an impetus for observers to engage in much more fundamental, wholesale reconstruction of national identity, the crucible of which (due to its apparent utility in explaining present circumstances) was the absolute legitimacy and

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[335] See: Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11-15.
[336] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 217.
[337] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 2.

morality of British resistance to Nazi Germany. Though of course, popular memory of the Second World War existed with or without involvement in later military conflicts, the Falklands War offered an opportunity to reclaim it and reaffirm its status as a foundation of a moral vision of British identity.

The Gulf War 1990-1991

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 elicited a strong reaction from Western and neighbouring Arab states, newly freed from the intense Cold War security struggle following the revolutions in Eastern Europe a year previously, and now keen to assert a muscular multilateral security.[338] The response was led by the United States and – following an ultimately fruitless effort to get the Hussein regime to cooperate diplomatically - involved the build-up of military assets in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, codenamed 'Desert Shield'. Eventually coalition personnel deployed to the region would number approximately one million, over half of whom were American. Britain, however, contributed nearly fifty thousand personnel; the second largest national contingent in the coalition and the single largest British overseas military deployment since the Korean War.[339] Coalition forces began a large-scale and intense bombing campaign against Iraq on 17 January 1991 after the Hussein regime failed to withdraw by the 15 January deadline mandated under UN Resolution 678. This was followed by a short ground war which lasted approximately one hundred hours and ended in a ceasefire on 28 February.[340]

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[338] William Thomas Allison, *The Gulf War 1990-1991* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 63-67; Cronin, *Global Rules*, 207-216; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*.

[339] For figures see: James Ciment, *Encyclopaedia of Conflicts since World War II* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2007); CNN Library, "Gulf War Fast Facts". Online, available at: http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/15/world/meast/gulf-war-fast-facts/ (Accessed 31-01-2018); Ministry of Defence, "1990/1991 Gulf Conflict", 2012. Online, available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120816163733/http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/HealthandSafety/GulfVeteransIllnesses/19901991GulfConflict.htm (Accessed 31-01-2018); Ministry of Defence, "UK Armed Forces Operational deaths post-World War II", 2017. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603234/20170330_UK_Armed_Forces_Operational_deaths_post_World_War_II-O.pdf (Accessed 31-01-2018); Royal Air Force, "British Forces Involved in Operation Granby", 2017. Online, available at: https://www.raf.mod.uk/history/BritishForcesinvolvedinOperationGranby.cfm (Accessed 31-01-2018); Royal Air Force, "Timeline of Operation Granby", 2017. Online, available at: https://www.raf.mod.uk/history/BritishForcesinvolvedinOperationGranby.cfm (Accessed 31-01-2018).

[340] Allison, *The Gulf War*; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*.

Similarly to the previous Falklands War, Britain had been involved in a short and decisive victory. Yet the conflict had been fought as part of a broader, US-led coalition, and involved a deployment of military power on an order of magnitude greater than in 1982. The conflict represented a point of departure from the Cold War, and revealed the preponderant position of the United States; its 'unipolar moment'.[341] Yet, like all cases I consider, the conflict pertained to a social or cultural dynamic for 'ordinary' people living in Britain. I suggest in this chapter that the Gulf War was also understood by observers as part of a British history or story, interpreted by the invocation of specific popular memories, and involving the construction and reconstruction of particular ideas of national identity.

I consider a random sample of responses from forty-two observers which were submitted to the 1990 'Gulf Crisis' directive (referred to as the 'Gulf directive' from here). The Gulf directive was issued 17 October 1990, two months after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the consequent coalition build-up of military forces in Saudi Arabia, and elicited responses from 631 observers, comprising 4435 pages largely hand-written material. It asked observers to "record your immediate reactions to the situation in the Middle East covering the following if you can: feelings about the main political figures involved, your reactions to military and diplomatic developments" and to "continue to keep a kind of log of your reactions to events."[342] Most observers either wrote lengthy responses over the period from its issuance to the end of the war and submitted them as a whole after, or sent in multiple responses over time. Thus, like responses concerning the previous Falklands War, the Gulf directive garnered perspectives and opinions throughout the initial crisis, the outbreak of military conflict, and its eventual ending and outcome.

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[341] For brief consideration of the Gulf War in the context of the end of the global Cold War, see: Cronin, *Global Rules*; Brands, *Unipolar Moment*.

[342] See Appendix II for a list of full directive sheets.

The Gulf directive generated an unusually large volume of responses from observers, far more than the previous Falklands directive or any subsequent directives related to Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. This figure attests to the contemporary importance attached to the Gulf War, a notable finding in itself given its lower profile in public and official commemoration in Britain since.[343] Again, like those responses written in 1982, the volume of submissions received was matched by the general enthusiasm and intensity with which observers wrote about a possible, and then realised, war with Iraq. Furthermore, observers were concerned with establishing the circumstances and context of the Gulf Crisis, but also drew on popular memories of the past in order to make sense of the present. Though detailed discussion of Prime Ministerial leadership was not a primary focus for observers, they were once more keen to evaluate whether the use of British force was justified, what combat was like, and what the crisis revealed about Britain's relative diplomatic position and its relationship with allies and enemies.

Observers drew on popular memories of the more distant British past, most prominently Britain's entry into the Second World War and the tyrannical aggression of Nazi Germany. As in 1982, the cohort of observers writing in 1990/1991 were frequently old enough to draw on memories of lived experience of the 1930s and 1940s, thus personal testimony melded with, and was often thought to lend weight to, more frequent and pervasive invocation of popular memory and Britain's *national* experience. Indeed, observers clarified the nature of the threat from Iraq by drawing comparison with the Nazis, and articulated their thoughts on its legitimacy by associating the regime, and person, of Saddam Hussein with that of Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler. Once more, this revealed a continuing preference for legitimate defence or protection against the advance of a dictatorial other. Further, the possibility of a particularly large-scale, destructive,

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[343] An official memorial for soldiers killed during the Gulf War was erected only in 2016. See: BBC News, "Memorial for Britons killed in first Gulf War is unveiled", 2016. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-35681158 (Accessed 24-01-2018).

risky and escalatory conflict in the Gulf was clearly foregrounded by more recent experience of the Cold War arms race. The rapid victory scored by the coalition, without the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, invalidated such anxieties. The relevance of Cold War tensions now largely dismissed, observers again focused primarily on World War Two as a point of reference when discussing contemporary conflict as others had done during the previous Falklands War. Despite much different political, international and military contexts, the Gulf War was incorporated within broader narratives of identity which were shared across cases, and were embedded heavily in persistent re-invocation of Britain's participation in World War Two.

Legitimacy

Observers were mostly supportive of the military campaign in Kuwait and Iraq, though observers were, collectively, not as certain about the legitimacy of conflict as the previous cohort writing about the Falklands War had been. Of the-forty two observers whose responses to the Gulf Crisis directive I have considered in this chapter, eighteen believed military force was justified against the Iraqi regime, while fourteen believed it was not. Ten observers were unable to arrive at a specific conclusion on the legitimacy of Britain's role in the Gulf War at all. Thus, while it is accurate to suggest that, as a proportion of observers, those who supported British involvement in the Gulf conflict were fewer than those who had previously supported the Falklands campaign, the most noticeable difference is the extent to which observers were less certain or unsure about the legitimacy of using military force.

For most who supported Britain's involvement in the conflict, legitimacy was based on a resistance to the aggressive expansion of the Iraqi regime. One observer wrote,

"I think that if a country is in danger from an enemy then it has to be defended… I see no alternative to our troops being sent to the Gulf"[344] while another asked, "Did Saddam really imagine he could just walk in to another country, and the rest of the world would allow him to do so? At once I thought 'no, no, no'".[345] Observers couched their belief in the legitimacy of defending Kuwait by referring to the militaristic and tyrannical actions of its neighbour. One wrote how "there is no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein is an aggressor and as such must be put in his place"[346] while another observer described how "this might indeed be a fearful war, but so also would the consequence of letting Saddam Hussein gain any advantage from his aggression."[347]

Others focused on the possibility of Iraqi ambitions for further aggressive expansion and in particular, the likelihood that the Iraqi regime might develop or use chemical, biological or nuclear weaponry. One observer identified the halting of Iraq's nuclear programme as the conflict's primary justification:

> The war has surely come about to prevent a dictator having the means to wage nuclear war in the near future, his invasion of Kuwait and occupation of that country providing the free world with the perfect excuse to attack the dictator and his armed forces. We all hoped sanctions would bring Saddam Hussein down without recourse to waging war against Iraq but that has proved to be ineffective in the time the free world had without causing dangers that were impossible to ignore.[348]

For another observer, nuclear proliferation was thought to be more important than the safety of hostages taken by the Iraqi regime (some of whom were British)[349] during the

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[344] MO D1559, female, born 1927.
[345] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[346] MO A18, male, born 1944.
[347] MO A2168, female, born 1960.
[348] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[349] BBC, "Iraq frees British hostages", 1990. Online, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/10/newsid_2544000/2544281.stm (Accessed 20-09-2017)

invasion of Kuwait; "I think, harsh though it sounds, the lives of Western Hostages may have to be disregarded for the sake of millions of others that could be lost if the Iraqis were ever to get their hands on atomic weapons."[350] In another response, intervention was fully justified by Hussein's history of warlike aggression and brutality, part of which was the use of chemical weapons on innocent Iraqi and Kurdish civilians:

> The trouble is we let Hussein get away with blue murder in the Iran-Iraq war and did nothing even when chemical weapons were used…. Now it is suspected Saddam Hussein has not only chemical weaponry but nuclear armaments as well. He is ambitious and no fool and we have realised the danger too late… They have committed atrocities there even torturing people and murdering children so somehow you have to take up arms and stop it.[351]

For another observer, the defence of Kuwait was highlighted as an important aspect in justifying the use of military force:

> It [the response to the Gulf crisis] will have to be a real solution which gives freedom back to Kuwait (whether they seek democracy must be their decision; freedom from occupation is their right), and at the very least strips Saddam Hussein of his poison gas/chemical weapons/nuclear weapons threats, and renders him incapable of terrifying Saudi Arabia, Israel or anybody else. If that is achieved, there are many other would-be dictators in the Middle East and elsewhere who will have cause to pause and wonder.[352]

The coalition campaign in 1991 was aimed narrowly at removing Iraqi military forces from Kuwait and restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty.[353] It is then interesting to note how little specific mention of Kuwait itself featured within responses to the Gulf crisis directive.

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[350] MO C1786, female, born 1950.
[351] MO C1713, female, born 1948.
[352] MO E1510, male, born 1926.
[353] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*; Allison, *The Gulf War*.

Observers much more frequently articulated a broader disgust with 'Iraqi aggression' or the threat from the Hussein regime. They were more concerned with legitimate resistance against what was characterised as a brutal and tyrannical expansionary threat in Iraq. Indeed, in some cases, as I consider shortly, the possibility that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was simply the beginning of a much larger expansion, or a much larger war, was a significant aspect of what observers wrote. The allusion to 'giving pause' to other dictators reveals the extent to which these observers conceived of the Gulf War as part of a wider struggle against dictatorship, tyranny, aggression and military expansion.

While this shared interpretation of legitimacy was informed by the specific context of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the more recent history of aggressive Iraqi militarism, it was frequently clarified alongside invocation of popular memories of Britain's road to World War Two, Nazi aggression, and a pervasive belief in the failure of appeasement in the 1930s:

…Saddam has been reading his Western history and he can take a bit off at a time just like Hitler did… It is just like Hitler and the Allies were in 1939, too little and too late.[354]

None of us want war, certainly not those of my generation, who saw the death and destruction of the last war, however even the most appeasement minded are asking what happens if Saddam is allowed to keep his spoils? Did appeasement restrain Hitler?[355]

Lived experience formed part of some observers' recollections, the effect of which was to lend an authority to their comparisons between past and present, and to clarify with greater confidence their perspectives on the current crisis in the Gulf and Britain's role in

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[354] MO A1292, female, born 1933.
[355] MO D2438, female, born 1924.

it. Personal experience was articulated as a basis for the re-invocation of *popular* memory:

> I am old enough, however, to remember Neville Chamberlain coming back from Munich and saying: 'out of this nettle of danger, we pluck this flower of safety'. He also said 'peace in our time'. How relieved we all felt – how misguided we were. It is understandable that people of my generation are suspicious of peace pacts when they remember those days.[356]

> For those of us who had been alive during the Second World War we remembered Hitler – another Dictator's tactics. He only wanted a little piece of Czechoslovakia, which he swore belonged to Germany, and he would be satisfied. So he was allowed to get away with it. I hoped sincerely this 1990 dictator would not… But this time, the United Nations were not prepared to let him get away with it, as countries who had belonged to the League of Nations had done when Hitler started his war mongering in the 1930s. Those of us who were born and had lived through the First and Second World Wars knew it was no good appeasing a Dictator and that it would not be long before he wanted more territory.[357]

> I was a soldier in the last war – in an infantry battalion. We were lucky enough to escape the desert warfare and our action was restricted to West Europe but I've just had another look at our Regimental History and reminded myself that from our battalion of approximately 750 men, we had 140 killed. The number wounded exceeded this a lot… I am, therefore, no blind supporter of war, but I am not a pacifist. I have a fervent passion for peace but there are times when the only answer to naked aggression is force.[358]

Though the exact nature of their recollections varied, the occurrence of the Gulf War gave an opportunity for observers who lived through the 1930s and 1940s to draw on personal

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[356] MO D1697, female, born 1923.
[357] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[358] MO D1419, male, born 1923.

experiences as children or young adults, reaffirming the Second World War as a cultural marker for their generation.[359] Yet this personal recollection occurred under the umbrella of well-known and familiar narratives of British identity and its entry into World War Two, again highlighting the extent to which memories of lived experience were recomposed as observers drew on popular memories.[360] In later conflicts, as those who lived through the Second World War era dwindled, observers continued to invoke popular memories which were thought to be relevant or important, demonstrating the extent to which both those with and without personal memories were able to construct narratives of the national past. Those who did draw on personal memories often suggested that this leant greater weight or authority to their accounts, yet they were engaged in the same process of constructing a specifically national story within which contemporary circumstances could be understood.

When considering whether the Gulf campaign was justified, observers who supported the military campaign against Iraq were less concerned by the specific status of Kuwait than they were about what the conflict revealed about Britain's identity. Observers conceived of legitimacy in the Gulf War most confidently when they suggested that Britain's contemporary identity was congruent with a familiar and well-rehearsed story about Britain's resistance to German aggression. Britain's entry into World War Two offered both a frame of reference and a benchmark for observers seeking to identify the legitimacy of a contemporary conflict. For those who articulated it in 1990 and 1991, the comparison seemed reasonable and legitimacy could be assured by association.

Thus the Gulf War gave observers not only an opportunity to suggest that Britain was right to use military force, but also to construct a much broader narrative of historical identity in which the contemporary circumstance could be incorporated. Once again this

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[359] See: Summerfield, "The generation of memory."
[360] Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11-15.

was rooted heavily in popular memory and reconstruction of British identity in the Second World War. The process was, despite much varied circumstances, similar to that which took place within observers' responses to the previous Falklands directive and was again determined heavily by the perceived circumstances of the present. In seeking to understand *why* Britain was involved the Gulf conflict observers were drawn to a discussion of *why* Britain had been involved in World War Two. As a consequence they focused heavily on British entry into the Second World War at the expense of its constituent events. When attempting to explain *legitimacy* in the present observers further reinforced the absolute legitimacy of Britain's use of military force in 1939, and a specific narrative in which Britain's policy of appeasement in the later 1930s was articulated reductively as a the failure to adequately deal with German aggression. As in 1982, those who referred to it reaffirmed the importance of the Second World War as a marker for Britain's contemporary identity, but again reconstructed a narrow, morally assured and celebratory narrative of British identity within it.

Of course, not all observers supported a military conflict. Fourteen of the forty-two considered here believed it was wrong to use military force against Iraq. It is important to recognise at this stage that no observers were sympathetic toward the Iraqi regime or felt they had a legitimate claim to Kuwaiti territory. Instead they were concerned that a war with Hussein's military machine would be too destructive (for Iraqi civilians in particular), given that diplomatic options apparently remained available, and that the justification for using force was therefore insufficient. One observer condemned "the use of force to resolve disputes"[361] and went on to write:

I want no part in it. I feel very, very upset but a member of a very small minority… How many Iraqi

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[361] MO A1530, female, born 1937.

families are sorrowing for their loved ones and how many will be blaming 'us' – and I am one of them – for their present and future miseries?[362]

This observer, like some who objected to Britain's Falklands campaign previously, characterised herself as part of a minority. As in 1982, those with a critical opinion believed public opinion was firmly behind the use of military force.

The possibility of diplomatic or peaceful resolution formed the basis of another observer's objections, though they were careful not to condone Iraq's initial aggression:

I rarely watch the TV news as I am a devoted radio 4 listener, but even there the media coverage was more about Britain's perspective and involvement than Kuwait's or its people. I agreed that Iraq could not just march into a country but I feel that sanctions could have been used for longer... I feel no pride for our forces involvement in all of this.[363]

Another observer focused on the apparent hypocrisy of action against Iraq in 1990, given its abuses in previous decades. The fear of a particularly devastating war – a feature of many responses written before the land war in February 1991 – further undermined the case for military intervention:

To pretend that this is a just war seems to me utter hypocrisy: no war as terrible as this one can possibly be justified. Evil Saddam Hussein may be (as he has shown in his persecution of the Kurds), but no one protested at the time when he let loose his deadly nerve gases. It took the expulsion of a corrupt ruling family from a tiny state to arouse the might of America and thus threaten world peace.[364]

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[362] MO A1530, female, born 1937.
[363] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[364] MO D996, female, born 1927.

For another observer the Gulf War was represented as part of a broader history of needless sacrifice and destructive waste. Criticism of the current campaign was framed by recollection of the loss of life suffered during the Falklands War, but also by invocation of the perceived futility and waste of the First World War:

> All I remember of the Falklands is the 400 young men deliberately 'murdered' on the Belgrano; with leaders like this it seems the First World War syndrome is back again. Cannon fodder so that our leaders can drive their Rolls... When a boatload of Argentinians landed on a remote island we set off like bats out of hell to 'save' about 1400 people from rule by foreigners… His [Hussein's] people do not deserve to die in their hundreds of thousands.[365]

The notion that British soldiers endured needless sacrifice at the whims of senior officers and staff – a central aspect of prevailing popular memory of the First World War[366] - was not a sentiment that was widespread among responses written in 1990. Yet this response does demonstrate the extent to which popular memories of past wars were important in clarifying the ideas of observers who objected to Britain's use of force in the present, as well as those who supported it. The invocation of ideas of futility, waste and illegitimate militarism helped subvert apparent popular support for the coalition campaign.

Other observers objected to a military campaign against Iraq on the grounds that the status of Kuwait obscured ulterior, largely American, motives related to the security of oil resources. One observer wrote, "how much exactly the politics of oil comes into the situation is unclear"[367] while another asked, "could it be that the oil is more important than lives?"[368] A similar sentiment was articulated in another response; "I am aware that President Bush has said that this is not 'just about oil' but one wonders what would have

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[365] MO A1473, female, born 1942.
[366] Todman, *The Great War*, 73-120.
[367] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[368] MO C1043, male, born 1960.

happened if a little country with no strategic importance had been invaded by a greedy neighbour?"[369]

Other observers were more pointed in their criticism. For one, the plight of occupied Kuwait was simply an excuse for the United States and its allies to use military force to pursue its own narrow self-interest:

I have also heard it said that the only reason that the USA is interested in what is going on is because there is oil in Kuwait and that if there were a war then it would be on account of oil and not out of sympathy for suffering people. I am inclined to believe this, because it sounds like the way politicians behave.[370]

Likewise, one observer described a conflict predicated on "oil and the West's access to it"[371] while another wrote about an acquisitive conflict which threatened the broader region:

Ordinary people… are worried for the 'boys out there dying for petrol… It seems my worst thoughts earlier are true – the war was to restore the West's ailing economies… Hussein just put his head on the block, but it might equally have been Iran, Turkey or Syria. So our shares rise and our interest rates fall on the bodies of the thousands of soldiers and civilians, and on a land made environmentally barren.[372]

Some observers clearly believed that Britain was involved in an aggressive conflict, the legitimacy of which was fundamentally undermined by the existence of Middle Eastern oil wealth. Yet it is important to stress that such ideas were not typical or common as a

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[369] MO A18, male, born 1944.
[370] MO A2212, female, born 1956.
[371] MO D1527, female, born 1960.
[372] MO A1473, female, born 1942.

proportion of the responses considered in this chapter. Most observers believed that the stability of the Middle East had been threatened by Iraqi aggression in 1990, not by British or American responses to it. Indeed, for another observer, the existence of Middle Eastern oil did not necessarily delegitimise a war predicated primarily on the illegitimate expansion of Iraqi power:

> Of course the whole battle has had the forces of good on its side – we must not let an aggressor win against an innocent party. But the hidden agenda is still the oil and the potential for Saddam Hussein to hold the rest of the world to ransom.[373]

Observers were again concerned with understanding the legitimacy of the Gulf campaign by considering how it related to British identity. Similarly to responses concerned with the previous Falklands War, those who supported the conflict often directly linked it to an assured, moral and legitimate entry into the Second World War, incorporating contemporary circumstances within a broader narrative of British resistance to dictatorial aggression. For those who objected to the campaign, allusions to futility and waste, infrequently linked to popular memory of the First World War, helped clarify the Gulf campaign as unwarranted or needless. These observers shared a concern with identifying legitimacy by considering whether Britain was thought to be acting in the *defensive* and importantly, did not suggest that military action was itself illegitimate. Invocation of the past helped to clarify observers' perspectives in the present.

However, dissimilar to responses written in 1982, ten of the observers I consider here did not offer a definitive evaluation of the legitimacy of Britain's position. One

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[373] MO A2464, male, born 1960.

described her distaste at being "in two minds"[374] while another described having "such mixed feelings toward this [Gulf] crisis."[375] For several observers the need to resist Iraqi aggression was obvious, yet it jarred with a sense that Britain should not be so quick to use military force or that British (or American) motivations in pursuing a conflict were not as they seemed:

> I'm not sure what I feel about the Gulf Crisis. Sometimes I feel furious that Saddam Hussein could get away with invading Kuwait and that he ought to be removed by force. Sometimes I agree with peace campaigners who want to make sure there's no war in the Middle East.[376]

> This subject is too big for me to come to terms with. I cannot say I wholly trust our own aims or cannot always believe the representatives from our allies. Time and time again, when we really learnt the truth of these terrible happenings in the world, there are usually dirty tricks on both sides that are revealed. I think Saddam Hussein to be an evil power hungry despot but having said that, I really cannot believe everyone on the other side is squeaky clean.[377]

One observer captured a sense that the use of military force against Iraq was less obviously justifiable than the previous Falklands campaign; "I do not feel that this is as completely justified a war as the Falklands War was, nor do I think it will arouse the same kind of patriotic feelings in people, but that remains to be seen."[378] Observers who were unsure about the legitimacy of British involvement in the Gulf conflict felt that multilateralism, American leadership, WMD, oil security and the lack of a threat to Britain or its territory – though they did not necessarily delegitimise the use of military force - were complicating factors.

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[374] MO D1697, female, born 1923.
[375] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[376] MO D1527, female, born 1960.
[377] MO D2205, female, born 1929.
[378] MO T544, female, born 1926.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of responses from observers who were unsure about the legitimacy of current conflict, especially when compared to those who were, is the comparative lack of reference to popular memories of past wars, most notably the Second World War. These observers evidently did not see specific similarities between the Gulf conflict and resistance to Nazi Germany. This may be due to the passing of the 'wartime generation' and the fading of the Second World War from living memory, yet popular memories remain prominent among responses to later conflicts and, at least among observers, the age range of those writing in 1990 and 1991 was not radically different to those writing in 1982 when observers more comprehensively referred to popular memories of the Second World War and Britain's entry into it. Instead, I suggest that it was the specifics of the contemporary circumstances that elicited a greater level of confusion or ambiguity. The possibility of a cataclysmic use of force (something considered in more detail shortly) or ulterior desires for oil security were considerations that were not present in 1982 and could not be as effectively explained by drawing on Britain's involvement in the Second World War. Contemporary context was crucial in informing what observers wrote, but clear conclusions were reached when they could be given meaning incorporation within a broader narrative of national identity.

Ultimately however, most observers conceived of a justified conflict against Iraq in 1990/1991, a finding that conforms to polling analyses conducted at the time.[379] What individual observers wrote about the conflict's legitimacy often varied but, as I suggest throughout this research, observers were less concerned by the specific political, legal or technical ramifications of military conflict when considering its legitimacy and were instead occupied with what it revealed about Britain, and whether it was congruent with broader shared narratives of Britain's historical identity. Here then, the Second World

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[379] See: Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, "British Public opinion during the Gulf War", *Contemporary British History*. 6, no. 2 (1992): 376-388; John Mueller, *Policy and Public Opinion in the Gulf War* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

War once more emerged as an important marker. While some who criticised the coalition campaign alluded to a narrative of futility and waste – drawing on popular memory of sacrifice in World War One – more believed that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait could be explained by direct association with Nazi Germany's expansionism immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War. Even among observers who criticised the use of military force, it was this underlying dynamic of legitimate defence against expansionary aggression which informed what observers wrote about legitimacy.

Thus observers made sense of the contemporary context by referring to the past, but – by extension - also engaged in a reconstruction of a seemingly assured and morally secure narrative of past military action, that existed prior to contemporary events, and was centred largely on Britain's experience in World War Two. Observers who disagreed with the use of force in the present did not seek to undo this narrative of British identity. They were instead more likely to suggest that contemporary conditions did not meet this benchmark. Even in the most critical examples, futility was not considered to be intrinsic in the use of force but was linked instead to the objectives of the campaign; some felt the campaign against Iraq was wrong, but no observers believed that it was *always* wrong to use military force. Though some observers characterised the Gulf conflict as a complex one and were less likely to re-invoke popular memory by way of clarification – at least when compared to responses to the previous Falklands directive – on the occasions in which observers did refer to the past, they reconstructed a narrative of British involvement based on the absolute legitimacy of resisting Nazi expansionism, and referred to appeasement as shorthand for a moral failure to deal with such aggression.

The Military, Combat, Expectation and Transformation

The Gulf War was a large-scale operation. The coalition built up in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait numbered nearly one million personnel, over half of whom were deployed by the United States. However, Britain's contribution – second in size only after that of the US[380] – numbered around 47,000 military personnel.[381] Though perhaps not aware of these details specifically, observers were quite clearly aware of the significance of the Gulf crisis as a potential (and then realised) military event. Writing during the crisis period and Desert Shield, observers imagined a potential conflict larger in scale than the previous Falklands War. Again, an older cohort of observers – many of whom were born before the Second World War – drew on lived experience as the 15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait approached:

Having gone through the last war I find it incredible that any sensible person can contemplate it yet again.[382]

I wait with horror for January 15th although the Iraqis said they will not fire first. I pray fervently for a solution but the demise of Hitler was not achieved without terrible loss of life, destruction and suffering first.[383]

But then I too did not want to articulate my feelings. I had lost my first husband in the last war, a bomber pilot. All those of my generation must have undergone similar anguished experiences. The

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[380] Allison, *The Gulf War*, 63-64.

[381] Ministry of Defence. "1990/1991 Gulf Conflict", 2012. Online, available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120816163733/http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/HealthandSafety/GulfVeteransIllnesses/19901991GulfConflict.htm (Accessed 24-01-2018).

[382] MO A1223, female, born 1925.

[383] MO C1713, female, born 1948.

younger generations would have no first-hand knowledge of the reality of war. Their wars were vicarious on screen, in books, in games.[384]

Observers often framed imagination of the actual combat or likely results of a war against Iraq in relation to what they remembered about their earlier years. They were thus able to describe personal experience of wartime conditions, lending an authority to their accounts and a weight to their opinions on the likely consequences of a war in Iraq. Where the legitimacy of the conflict was often framed by the invocation of popular memory of Britain's entry into the conflict – resistance to Nazi expansion and the failure of appeasement – elderly observers considered the nature of modern combat and its consequences by recalling the emotional loss and sacrifice which they had endured as children or adolescents.

Mostly however observers imagined a conflict in Iraq that would be unlike those experienced previously. They believed that the war risked escalation and that the use of arsenals built up over the preceding Cold War era might create a truly global catastrophe. Variously observers suggested that "this is world war three",[385] that "this could turn into a world war, with use of nuclear and chemical and germ weapons",[386] or that "I feel sure that there is going to be a ghastly conflagration and what will come out of it will probably create as many problems or more than we have already experienced."[387] Other observers used the term 'holocaust' to describe what they imagined a war in the Gulf might entail:

My main reaction to the war in the gulf is fear and dread for the young men who are involved in the build up to war… I am convinced that the holocaust will be so horrific that the planet will never recover, and there will be no winners… I cannot come to terms with all these people just going to a

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[384] MO D153, female, born 1912.
[385] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[386] MO C1043, male, born 1960.
[387] MO D2205, female, born 1929.

war that will be unimaginably terrible, and the outcome of which will be massive numbers of dead and maimed.[388]

I'm horrified to think of the dreadful suffering our troops are facing, when we see on TV the plans being made for hospitals to be ready to receive the thousands of casualties that will no doubt result from such a holocaust.[389]

Some observers were particularly worried about the prospects of British soldiers facing chemical weaponry in Iraq. One described how her "only puzzlement now is how long does Saddam Hussein hope to last out or is he going to use chemical weapons to aggravate the situation even more"[390] while another asked "Can they last long in their [Nuclear, Chemical and Biological warfare] suits if real hand to hand fighting begins?"[391]

In some cases anxiety over the use of WMD extended to the wider region or the globe, and the possibility of conflagration. One observer feared the consequences "if Iraq is able to fit chemical warheads to its missiles."[392] For another, the Iraq crisis posed a potentially global catastrophe:

The situation in the Middle East worries me very much indeed. The Iraqi president will use chemical and biological weapons without compunction (both illegal) and if ever he were to get atomic weapons, the result would be unthinkable. He has to be stopped.[393]

The prospect of conflict against Iraq elicited some personal remembrance of the fear and loss of war, but most observers seemed concerned with the prospects of a specifically

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[388] MO A1223, female, born 1925.
[389] MO D2438, female, born 1924.
[390] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[391] MO A1473, female, born 1942.
[392] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[393] MO C1786, female, born 1950.

modern conflict, potentially involving Weapons of Mass Destruction. While no observers connected a potential or realised conflict in the Gulf directly to the Cold War arms race in their written accounts, it is clear that many drew on a language of escalation and global devastation that connoted the tensions associated with the global security struggle of the previous decades.[394] The possibility of miscalculation and disaster informed what they wrote before the ground campaign; many observers seemed genuinely to have expected a 'holocaust.'

As the coalition air campaign began in January 1991, observers also focused on the threat to the natural world, describing their shock at the scale of ecological devastation and adding to the sense that the conflict was particularly degrading and dangerous. One observer wrote about "The awful suffering to the birds, goodness only knows what the long-term effect on the creatures of the seas. I guess we will be reaping his [Hussein's] wicked harvest for years and years."[395] Another described the desolation:

> The TV News was devastating reporting the oil that was being poured into the Gulf, illustrated by pictures of cormorants covered in oil and either dying or dead. I could only mutter, 'oh my god' over and over again, remembering a beautiful programme on the natural life forms of that area that I had seen some months earlier on TV. So lovely, so fascinating, now to be horribly suffocated and killed.[396]

As coalition forces were built up in Saudi Arabia observers stressed the extraordinary scale of the coming war effort, and identified the existence of unconventional weaponry on both sides; aspects of the Gulf War that were not apparent during the previous

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[394] For a related study, see: Kari Poikolainen, Riita Kanerva and Jouko Lonnqvist, "Increasing fear of nuclear war among adolescents before the outbreak of the Persian Gulf War", *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry.* 52, no. 3 (1998) 197-202.

[395] MO A1733, female, born 1928.

[396] MO A1530, female, born 1937.

Falklands conflict. As Desert Storm began, the burning of oil wells and environmental destruction wrought in Kuwait further added to an apocalyptic vision of the conflict. I suggest here that while observers frequently invoked popular memories of Britain's road to the Second World War when evaluating the moral or political legitimacy of using military force against Iraq, or the nature of the Iraqi regime, they were less inclined to draw on lived experience or popular memories of the Second World War to imagine outcome of military action. Instead, those who sought to imagine the conflict's likely consequences described one that was resonant with the prevailing fears and anxieties of the Cold War. The use of hi-tech and unconventional weaponry – which many assumed would take place – figured what observers wrote war against Iraq before the February ground campaign, and was framed by what observers knew about the nuclear arms race, cataclysm, conflagration and escalation.

As Desert Storm began, most observers conceived of the campaign as one primarily based on air power. The RAF contributed to an operation, beginning on 17 January 1991, which involved not only large numbers of aircraft (upward of 100,000 sorties flown throughout the campaign) but also involved the use of high-tech 'smart' bombs. Some 88,000 tons of air ordnance was dropped on the Iraqi military, the largest single bombing campaign since Operation Rolling Thunder, the US Air Force's bombing of North Vietnam.[397]

Some observers were impressed by the involvement of the Royal Air Force. They wrote that "We must be surprised and delighted that from day one of waging war the air supremacy has been ours. Iraq had a large and battle proven air force… It does appear that this may be the first war won by weapons delivered through the air."[398] For another, the romance of aerial combat was exuded by "our magnificent Tornado Fighters of the

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[397] Figures for the coalition air campaign in the Gulf are freely available, see; Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1993).
[398] MO A883, male, born 1933.

RAF [who] were praised for the low level flying over enemy territory, to carry out their raids."[399] Such references characterised Britain's airpower as a heroic vocation. They were rare however, offered only by these two observers.

Most were critical of the coalition air campaign. As Desert Storm progressed it became apparent that the RAF was involved not in daring raids or dogfights, celebrated aspects of Britain's experience in the Second World War in particular,[400] but in the bombing of largely undefended Iraqi ground forces, military installations and civilian infrastructure. In particular, the bombing of Iraqi soldiers retreating from Kuwait[401] was met with indignation by both observers who supported British involvement and those who didn't:

> The TV pictures yesterday of the massacre of the fleeing Iraqi army was the most terrible and squalid report of this entire war. Hardly a war – a weapons test on 'gooks' by the US and others… The allies must be guilty of near-genocide in their attack on the retreating Iraqi army. A senseless slaughter.[402]

The 'evil effects' of the bombing campaign seemed to some observers, to delegitimise the coalition intervention itself:

> The evil effects of the war continue, even though it is over. The fact that so many Iraqis were killed in comparison with members of Allied troops does not make the situation better: in some respects it

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[399] MO D2092, female, born 1919.

[400] Francis, *The Flyer*.

[401] Commonly referred to as the 'highway of death', retreating Iraqi units were bombed by coalition air forces before they could leave Kuwait and regroup in Southern Iraq. The media reception of this incident is well documented as images of burnt-out Iraqi vehicles were shown around the world. See, for example: Torie Rose Deghett, "The War Photo No One Would Publish", *The Atlantic,* 2014. Online, available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/the-war-photo-no-one-would-publish/375762/ (Accessed 18-04-2018).
There does, of course, remain a dispute over the number of Iraqis actually killed or injured in the bombing as it is difficult to identify how many simply left their stationary vehicles before they were hit. See, Allison, *The Gulf War*, 141.

[402] MO A1473, female, born 1942.

seems worse, because it makes it seem that the Western powers were like bullies, killing people who had the misfortune to be under an oppressive and evil regime and were conscripted against their will into the army.[403]

The change recorded within responses submitted by one individual was indicative of how the coalition bombing campaign was received. During the initial stages he wrote of the accidental bombing of an air-raid shelter in Bagdad as "a tragic mistake"[404] yet by the end of his correspondence the tone and focus had changed markedly:

> Unnecessary repeated bombing of the Iraqis when retreating from Kuwait to Basra; nearly all the vehicles appear to be civilian ones, hardly a tank or other tracked vehicle to be seen.[405]

Observers were clearly uncomfortable with the level of destruction wrought by the coalition and, by extension, Britain's air forces. Some were particularly critical of the 'modern' aspect of the coalition's campaign, suggesting that the new smart weaponry deployed in the Gulf obscured the inevitable suffering involved. A teacher who vehemently opposed the conflict offered such a response:

> Once the war began I thoroughly disliked the jingoistic pride my students had in the technology of conflict – it was too far removed from life and death. If a building could be blown up by targeting a bomb through an air vent was it still so marvellous when people were inside?[406]

Naturally, observers who focused on the aerial campaign in this manner found it difficult to articulate a positive military identity for Britain during the conflict. The bombing of

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[403] MO A2212, female, born 1956.
[404] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[405] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[406] MO A2464, male, born 1960.

Iraq, for one observer, elicited recollection of an uncomfortable aspect of Britain's Second World War:

> Remember Dresden! Such a fear, while Iraqi civilians, according to a Spanish journalist in yesterday's Guardian, are bombed and killed. Apparently he visited a small town and found it almost flattened – no strategic importance at all and full of refugee families from Baghdad.[407]

Invocation of the strategic bombing of Germany served in this example to underline the illegitimacy of using air power against Iraq, and shows the extent to which Britain's experience and identity in World War Two could be invoked by observers in order to negate British action in the present. In later conflicts, notably in Kosovo in 1999, observers were inclined to draw on memory of the bombing of Germany and the Blitz in order to frame British use of air power and articulate a broadly critical and disproving opinion, though the relationship between adopted tactics and the underlying legitimacy of intervention remained complex.

The Gulf War in its totality was not viewed primarily as a ground engagement by observers. Very few chose to discuss Britain's ground forces as a previous cohort had done during the Falklands War, and no observers discussed the Royal Navy in detail despite its role in destroying Iraqi vessels and intercepting Iraqi anti-ship missiles.[408] Only in one response was Britain's ground force considered at length. This observer drew on popular memory of Britain's North Africa campaign during World War Two as a reference for describing the British contribution:

> On 24th February, the Allies had had enough, and the land war commenced. It was a magnificent sight, and you could tell, every care was being taken to preserve the lives of the soldiers… The

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[407] MO A1473, female, born 1942.
[408] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*.

Seventh armoured brigade, The Desert Rats – a familiar name from the last war. And the operation was a well named one; Desert Storm… We thank God, but won't forget the men who will not return and gave their lives for freedom.[409]

She went on to describe the contribution of military personnel to the coalition as an embodiment of Britain's identity in opposing the tyranny and aggression of Hussein's Iraq; "the desert became the stores arsenal of the free world. Men appeared clad in camouflage uniforms, gigantic tanks and vehicles rolled across the sands."[410] Only in this one response did a detailed discussion of Britain's frontline soldiers emerge. In fact, in two other responses written by observers who were highly critical of Britain's involvement in the Gulf War, soldiers seemed to embody the futility of the war:

Soldiers die without understanding [that] completely innocent people are killed for no reason, falsely believing that they are making patriotic sacrifices.[411]

They [soldiers] chose that way of life and all the peace-time advantages it brings. I have no sympathy for them now they are caught up in something they and their families did not expect. They had a choice to join up in the first place and they have made it.[412]

Observers were as likely to critique military service as they were to celebrate it on the few occasions frontline soldiers were discussed during the Gulf conflict. Indeed, the ground war in Kuwait and Iraq began on 24th February 1991 and lasted around a hundred hours and, of the nearly fifty-thousand British personnel deployed, forty-seven were killed, thus

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[409] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[410] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[411] MO A2212, female, born 1956.
[412] MO A2464, male, born 1960.

it is perhaps unsurprising that so few observers chose to discuss Britain's frontline soldiers specifically.

The Gulf War was conceived of differently to the previous Falklands War. The latter was represented as a ground war in which the important events had been decisive land battles fought by professional soldiers on the British side, the quality and character of whom was often framed by invocation of Britain's celebrated military history. By contrast, the Gulf War was widely considered to be an imbalanced use of massive, modern air power. Though some observers did discuss British ground forces, or portray the RAF in a positive, daring light, most articulated discomfort with Britain's adopted tactics and strategy. The conflict was rarely linked to past glories or military triumph and instead elicited anxiety or dissatisfaction. Allusions to the strategic bombing of Germany in the Second World War demonstrated simultaneously the continued explanatory power of popular memories of that war, and the extent to which observers were uncomfortable with aerial bombardment as a marker for Britain's identity during the Gulf conflict.

Though Desert Storm dealt severe damage within Iraq and crippled its military, the conflict certainly did not result in any of the catastrophic consequences many observers had feared before its conclusion. Thus, regardless of their beliefs in the legitimacy of Britain's involvement or the use of massive air power, frequently observers were forced to confront the fact that the military campaign had ended in way that they had not foresaw. One wrote during the ground war that "The allies are meeting with very little opposition and Iraqi soldiers are giving themselves up without fighting. It seems an awful thing to say but it's all a bit of an anti-climax considering the 'mother of all battles' we were promised!"[413] For another, the rapid capitulation of the Iraqi military seemed unbelievable:

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[413] MO C1786, female, born 1950.

I thought perhaps it would continue for months or years. I was very doubtful that the government was telling the truth, and I thought that we had perhaps been presented with an optimistic view of winning the war within a short time. Fortunately it was not prolonged.[414]

Iraqi capitulation dispelled pre-existing fears about escalation or conflagration, nuclear or otherwise. In responses to later directives, no observers suggested that intervention in Kosovo, Afghanistan or even Iraq would result in a regional or global 'holocaust.' The conclusion of the Gulf War therefore represents a departure within observers' responses from the prevailing military logic of the Cold War in which large scale use of military force risked escalation and devastation, to a much less risky reality of limited and conventional war. By contrast, popular memories of Britain's Second World War have endured throughout as a frame of reference for observers seeking to represent Britain's role in recent conflicts. This persistent importance of British involvement in the Second World War as a frame of reference is, I argue, a result of observers' collective and continued focus on the legitimacy of the conflicts in which Britain was involved. Only briefly during the initial stages of the Gulf crisis and war did observers worry about whether the use of force was risky, or even possible. Those fears dispelled, ideas of Mutually Assured Destruction, conflagration and escalation retained little explanatory power during subsequent conflicts. Memory of World War Two remained more visible and vibrantly contested within their responses, despite being more distant from the present.[415]

Observers naturally focused on the outcome of the conflict after the rapid success of the coalition campaign. For many, the fact that Saddam Hussein remained in power in

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[414] MO A2212, female, born 1956.

[415] A phenomenon that has been noted elsewhere. See: Finney, "Introduction"; Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*, 265-289.

Iraq despite the use of massive military force was highly unsatisfactory.[416] Only two observers described a successful mission when they wrote that "It is definitely right for the US and Allies not to interfere… and to withdraw as soon as possible"[417] and that "The UN cannot legally intervene in the [subsequent] civil war [in Iraq]."[418] Most who wrote about the military outcome specifically were disheartened or frustrated to see the Iraqi regime left in power, having conceived of the conflict as one predicated more broadly on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. Thus, it came as a shock that the coalition would use its massive military advantage for the purpose solely of removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait:

> Saddam Hussein is still in power and Major is talking of sanctions!! What a bloody cock-up! So now we win the peace do we?[419]

> Well now it is all over and done with but in retrospect I don't think we did enough, we came home too soon, Hussein should have been captured to stand trial for all the dreadful things he has done to people, their lives and the consequences of the damage to the environment which will persist for many generations.[420]

> Whilst I am a Christian it does seem to me that the Allies failed in what they set out to do and by not either removing him from the scene or at least, ensuring his detainment on a war crimes charge. I'm far from sure that what we have seen represents the end of the story. I only hope that common sense will prevail.[421]

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[416] The coalition operation led by the Bush administration planned a strictly limited operation in which regime change would only be considered in the event of a chemical or biological attack against coalition forces or Israel. See: Allison, *The Gulf War*, 138-144.
[417] MO D826, female, born 1950.
[418] MO E1510, male, born 1926.
[419] MO A1473, female, born 1942.
[420] MO A1733, female, born 1928.
[421] MO A18, male, born 1944.

What has been achieved apart from the liberation of Kuwait? Saddam Hussein is still leader, the armed forces do not appear to have turned against him, on the contrary by all estimates they are now shelling and attacking all those in Iraq who oppose Saddam Hussein.[422]

Securing Kuwaiti sovereignty alone, though a military victory, was not an adequate settlement given the totality of Iraq's defeat. Thus a sense of victorious triumph was not a feature of observers' written accounts. The tactics adopted, based largely on air power, were thought to be ethically ambiguous by most observers, and the result of the conflict did not appear to be a victory in anything other than a technical sense for most. Foregrounded by Britain's resistance to tyrannical aggression in the 1930s and 1940s, many observers conceived of the war against Iraq to be one predicated on similar circumstances. They were naturally disappointed by the limited nature of its outcome. Indeed, observers did not attempt to link the military action against Iraq to memories of past victories or well-known narratives of British military heroism. One observer lamented the ambiguous conclusion of the conflict by drawing on her memory of a previous case, "Unlike the Falklands, this [the Gulf War] is a war without a real ending."[423] This is an increasingly familiar sentiment among responses to later directives as observers recalled Britain's Falklands War as an instance of justified, defensive and limited military action which, importantly, represented a singular and celebrated military triumph.

In later conflicts, the spectre of escalation and broader catastrophe having dissipated, observers focused on the prospects and ethics of Britain's conventional forces. The Gulf War represents an instance in which military triumph was lacking, primarily because of the ambiguous nature of air power in observers' minds, but also because land

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[422] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[423] MO C1786, female, born 1950.

forces were used briefly and were afforded little place within what observers wrote. This is repeated in the Kosovo War in 1999 and again during the initial intervention in Afghanistan. While frontline troops took centre stage from the Iraq War in 2003, none of these later conflicts delivered the sort of celebrated and unambiguous military victory achieved in the Falklands War. The Gulf War was materially successful in the sense that Iraqi forces were removed from Kuwait. Observers however, made sense of the conflict by referring to broader narratives of identity and popular memory. Having foregrounded the conflict as a struggle against dictatorial aggression and the Hussein regime rather than the status of Kuwait specifically, observers were more disappointed with the outcome than British or American policy makers.

Leaders and Leadership

Observers rarely related the Gulf conflict to domestic leadership or the person of the Prime Minister, certainly not to the extent that a previous cohort had when writing about the Falklands War, and likewise not to the extent that subsequent cohorts did when evaluating Tony Blair's role in the Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The comparative absence of detailed discussion of leadership here was due perhaps to the departure of Margaret Thatcher, and her replacement by John Major, in November 1990 as the Gulf crisis unfolded. Observers were presented with a new national leader who had inherited the crisis in the Middle East, and seemingly could not be personally associated with Britain's part in the Gulf coalition.

Of course some observers did consider the impact the new Prime Minister might have on British policy. One was pleased to see Major assume control of a serious situation:

> Thank goodness Mrs Thatcher was made to resign before this war started. I can imagine her strident tone and criticism of the media for showing both sides of the war. Instead we fortunately have the calm tone of Mr Major, her successor.[424]

Another observer similarly discussed the need for serious leadership during the crisis, though the Prime Minister's lack of personal experience of World War Two in particular was troubling:

> I feel happier now that Mrs Thatcher has ceased to be PM. I admire her for all her good and hard work for Britain but latterly she worries me as she seemed to be becoming very belligerent… Mrs Thatcher however, lived through the 39-45 war, like me, and Mr Major did not. I just hope he keeps his cool and thinks of the heartache and anguish that war could bring.[425]

As I have suggested throughout, the possibility of war against Iraq brought memories the Second World War into sharp focus for observers. Having lived or personal experience both served as a generational marker for observers and leant an authority to their perspectives on the current conflict. Frequently a claim to understand what could be expected in wartime was articulated alongside a broader belief in the legitimacy of using military force; the horrors of war did not necessarily undermine the use of military violence, but served instead as a reminder of the seriousness of the issues at hand.

Other observers were rather more disappointed by Major's leadership as the crisis unfolded. One objected to Britain's involvement in the conflict, highlighting the lamentable continuity between the Thatcher and Major governments in pursuing American interests; "It is of course a great disappointment to find that Mr Major is no less

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[424] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[425] MO D1697, female, born 1923.

belligerent and no more independent minded than was Mrs Thatcher *vis a vis* American policy".[426]

For most however, John Major's leadership was simply not considered an important aspect of their accounts. Having inherited British involvement in the unfolding international crisis, he was represented as an unknown quantity or a diplomatic lightweight. One observer sardonically described how "Mr Major actually says these are 'exciting' times – perhaps he ought to be sent home to play with his train set."[427] The rapid conclusion of the ground war further compounded a sense within responses that Major's role in the war had been minimal. It was not associated with his political or ideological program, or his leadership style in the manner that previous and subsequent conflicts were with both Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair.

Perhaps because Prime Ministerial leadership did not feature heavily among responses to the Gulf Crisis directive several observers focused instead on a wider range of domestic political leaders and notable people. After criticising John Major's amateurish leadership style, one observer went on to consider individuals who best represented anti-war opinion:

> The Labour party keep on about making sanctions work but most of them seem to accept the inevitability of war after a few more months. A notable exception is Tony Benn.[428]

Another lamented the failure of opposition leaders to take a stance against the policy of the Thatcher and Major governments:

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[426] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[427] MO A1473, female, born 1942.
[428] MO A1473, female, born 1942.

The Labour party under Neil Kinnock (groan) has lost an opportunity to expose such yawning gaps...

The Welsh windbag thinks that if he runs with the dogs of war, an election victory will see the

Tories off. I am convinced that to be so unprincipled will be to forfeit such a prize.[429]

These comments show the extent to which the Gulf War was thought by observers to affect domestic politics and that, among those who were critical of British involvement, the apparent unity in parliament was particularly unwelcome. Yet they were few in number suggesting that observers were less concerned about the domestic impact or political ramifications of Desert Storm, at least when come compared to the previous Falklands campaign or those subsequent, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The reasons for this are difficult to establish. Certainly it is not the case that the Gulf War was considered a peripheral or unimportant event. In fact many observers identified the possibility of war with Iraq as potentially extraordinarily destructive and the sheer volume of responses submitted to the directive suggests that observers were highly motivated by the prospect of conflict. Instead, observers rarely discussed John Major because they did not conceive of his leadership as that of a wartime leader. He was not be associated personally with Britain's entry into the Gulf War and therefore was rarely thought of as a figurehead for Britain's policies or position. In previous and subsequent conflicts political leaders were though to embody Britain's political position in the conflict and, in some cases, represented a demarcation between the nation and the state. In the Gulf War, few observers were able or willing to make such a connection. Had the conflict been interpreted much more critically – seen as a more aggressive or offensive act on Britain's part – Major's status with responses may have been different.

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[429] MO A1530, female, born 1937.

The UN, USA and International Politics

Observers conceived of the crisis triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as one of global importance, involving a variety of actors and institutions outside of Britain. Responses included discussion of the United Nations and Britain's alliance with America. Less frequently observers discussed the regional political context in the Middle East. Though some did link the Gulf crisis to wider problems – in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict – it is quite evident that most were focused primarily on relations between Iraq and members of the coalition arrayed against it, including Britain.

Often however, observers suggested that the recourse to war in 1990 demonstrated the failure of international diplomacy and leadership. Observers lamented "the hypocrisy shown by all sides"[430] and described how "the heads of government should be made by their populations to sit down and stay there until a conclusion is reached to every ones satisfaction."[431] As I have suggested earlier, observers in some cases felt confused or ambivalent about the possibility of a conflict in Iraq, failing to reach a conclusion on whether Britain should take part at all. For one observer, the intractable nature of the dispute was compounded by the spiralling escalation witnessed during Desert Shield:

> The whole thing feels like a mad game played by world leaders – sell them arms, call hostages 'guests', let some people (journalists, relatives) into Iraq but not keep them as hostages, put more and more troops in Saudi Arabia so that the numbers match the Iraqi troops.[432]

The Gulf War prompted observers to discuss the status of the United Nations as a forum for resolving international. During the initial crisis period following the Iraqi invasion of

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[430] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[431] MO A1223, female, born 1925.
[432] MO D1527, female, born 1950.

Kuwait observers wrote of a "hope [that] all the United Nations stand up to him [Hussein]"[433] and "that if all nations took the United Nations ideals seriously and acted on their resolutions, the world would certainly be a much better place for everyone".[434] For another observer, apparent diplomatic consensus in condemning the Iraqi invasion engendered optimism for the UN:

> I thank whatever gods may be for Gorbachev, Bush and the renewed effectiveness of the United Nations. If this man [Hussein] can be stopped without war, they will do it.[435]

However, like the Falklands War previously, the failure to modify Iraqi actions, and the recourse to war, revealed for some the perennial failures of the organisation, described by one observer thus:

> The UN have and always will be of no use to anyone. They haven't got a clue. They should be disbanded and another group formed to deal with the age were living in. There is a great need for countries to meet together and thrash problems out, but how and where? I just know that the United Nations has had its day.[436]

For another, the formation of a coalition that was not mandated directly by the UN was met with disappointment:

> I feel that the United Nations condemned the invasion [of Kuwait], as I understand it but they left it to individual nations to supply troops, maybe there is some legal reason for the United Nations

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[433] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[434] MO D2205, female, born 1929.
[435] MO E1510, male, born 1926.
[436] MO D1559, female, born 1927.

setting up a force which to me would seem more logical as the invasion seems to be condemned by most of the world.[437]

The Gulf War was the first large-scale, multi-national conflict to occur outside the context of the global Cold War. Some observers clearly felt optimistic about the possibility that the United Nations might take a more muscular role in ensuring multilateral security and ending international disputes, and several were keen to identify Britain as a responsible actor within it. As in the previous Falklands War however, such hopes seem largely to have been dashed by Iraq's failure to withdraw from Kuwait and the ultimate resort to military force, again engendering a characterisation among responses that diplomacy through the UN had failed.

In fact, Britain's contribution to the coalition as a junior partner threw up a new dimension to their submissions which would be repeated among responses to later directives concerning Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Some observers were concerned that, in lacking a dedicated UN force, Britain was taking part in an operation that was too obviously dominated by the United States, something which brought along its own diplomatic and political problems:

The Americans seem curiously ignorant about Muslims and their faith, considering the black Muslims in the US…the US do not want to bring in Palestine probably because of the friends of Israel in the US. We seem to be bending over to support America and denigrate any other line… Thank goodness the Germans and French appear to be coming to their senses. Let's hope it's not too late. This European movement towards negotiations and pro-sanctions is the only lifeline there is.[438]

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[437] MO A1646, female, born 1932.
[438] MO A1473, female, born 1942.

I appreciate that America is a major force within the United Nations, but did they have to take such a notable stance and lead? And what on earth was Britain doing running along after her coat-tails? Are we really such a Great Power again?[439]

Another observer was more critical about the dominant world role assumed by the United States. She suggested that narrow American self-interest and domestic political considerations undermined the possibility of UN-led multilateral security and were exacerbating the crisis over Iraq and Kuwait. Her account centred on a simplistic description of Zionism in the United States:

It must seem obvious to any thinking person with the imagination to envisage what this projected war will be like if it does actually take place that genuine efforts at a diplomatic solution must be made, but that the American government is completely unwilling to even try to negotiate. One can only conclude that this is because diplomacy would sooner or later inevitably involve the inclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian impasse and no American president can afford to alienate the Jewish vote. Therefore a devastating war may begin just to protect the Republican leadership in the United States and perpetuate the oppression of the Palestinians by the Israelis. Another example of American dishonesty was the way in which reluctant members of the United Nations were induced to vote for the crucial United Nations resolutions by offers of financial help as a reward: in other words they were bought.[440]

Though varying in intensity, these responses reveal a critical attitude to the United States, dissatisfaction with Britain's comparative junior role, and a preference for stronger international institutions in resolving international crises. Yet they also reveal certain ideas and narratives of identity which observers conferred onto Britain's closest ally. The United States was described as overbearing, self-interested, intolerant, ignorant and even

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[439] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[440] MO D996, female, born 1927.

dishonest. Anxieties over the alignment between Britain and the US revealed a preference for British status and independence, but also suggested that most observers considered Britain to be more tolerant, moderate and cautious by comparison. Again, a preference for a defensive and unaggressive posture – a key aspect of observers' discussions of legitimacy – was reinforced by a representation of an ally determined to make war. This, in particular, was a salient feature of responses to subsequent directives, most notably those concerning the 2003 Iraq War.

Observers rarely considered in detail the politics of the region or Iraq's post-colonial, sectarian or pan-Arabic history. One observer embedded discussion of the contemporary crisis within a consideration of the broader region and Arab-Israeli conflict:

> The main political figures involved, well apart from Saddam, there are about 15 groups who think that Israel has no right to exist; some of their leaders are the murderer Abu Nidal and various other similar, anonymous but still deadly. When/if Saddam has finished with Kuwait which is only a small country of which we know (almost) nothing, then he and Syria might form a new Moslem alliance and have a go at Israel.[441]

In one other response an observer questioned the origin of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by referring to the region's colonial past:

> I have a feeling that everything was out of control very quickly after the invasion of Kuwait. I read somewhere recently that Saddam Hussein was led to believe that the Americans were not particularly interested in his ideas about Kuwait. Kuwait seems a very unnatural place with so much money concentrated in such a small place – and with it not even being a democracy – one wonders how it could have been there at all. I haven't got a very clear idea about the history of the Middle East but have heard it is said that a civil servant took out a ruler and drew a straight line on a map

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[441] MO A1292, female, born 1933.

across the desert and thus created a border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia sometime after the First World War when we were still in our Imperial heyday as a nation.[442]

The status and history of Kuwait was not a salient feature of observers' responses. When it was discussed observers admitted to knowing little about the history of the region or Iraq's claims to it. Though observers' views on Britain's involvement in the Gulf War were determined by what they knew about it contemporary circumstances, the haziness with which they discussed the specifics of the region's politics demonstrated further the way in which the conflict was understood by considering what it meant for *Britain* rather than Kuwait or the wider Middle East, and how it could be incorporated within broader narratives of British history and identity. Discussions of colonialism or imperial control – particularly important within the broader history of both Iraq and Kuwait[443] - were largely absent in this regard.

Observers recognised that Britain's role in the Gulf crisis, and the subsequent conflict, was multilateral and junior to that of the United States. Once again, they broadly reaffirmed a sense that Britain – like all nations – ought to be bound by a strong and decisive United Nations, yet they were often fatalistic about its prospects and saw the failure to reverse Iraqi aggression by diplomatic means as another indication of the apparent weakness of the UN. With detailed discussion of regional politics largely absent, most observers saw the conflict as one between Iraq on one side, and an American-led coalition on the other. The subordinate role Britain played in the coalition revealed a latent desire for British agency and status on the one hand, but also a desire for

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[442] MO D2205, female, born 1929.

[443] Certainly, Kuwait was an 'unnatural place' in the sense that it had been brought under the protection of British imperial authorities in 1899, against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, and remained so until 1961. It has been considered by successive generations of Iraqi nationalists and Ba'athists – including Saddam Hussein – to be a colonial construct and legitimately part of Iraq. See: Allison, *The Gulf War*, 13. For a narrative history of British imperial involvement in the construction of Arab states in the Middle East, see: James Barr, *A Line in the Sand* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

strengthened international institutions on the other. Indeed, the identification of the United States as a hegemon during the crisis drew comparison and contrast. Observers engaged in a persistent process of othering in which the rash, overbearing arrogance of an American ally could be contrasted with the tolerance and moderation of its British junior partner. This comparison is a persistent motif across responses related to later conflicts and is a direct result of contemporary circumstances, namely Britain's repeated involvement in US-led military coalitions. Consistent reconstruction of the differences between Britain and America offered an aspect of continuity in which a narrative of British caution, moderation and tolerance was rearticulated and reinforced.

The Enemy Other: Saddam Hussein's Iraq

Perception of Britain's opponent during the Gulf crisis was a crucial aspect of observers' collected responses. Largely their accounts reduced the Iraqi regime to the figure of Saddam Hussein who was portrayed as a brutal dictator. Hussein was described by supporters of a military intervention against Iraq as "mad or bad… paranoid and unpredictable",[444] "power hungry",[445] and a "murdering piece of shit".[446]

Observers who responded to the previous Falklands Crisis directive had not suggested that the Argentinian occupation had resulted in brutal or abhorrent conditions for the Islanders, and had focused largely on the fascistic nature of the Junta. In 1990 observers who wrote about the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait sometimes stressed the plight of Kuwaitis under the oppressive yoke of Hussein's brutal regime:

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[444] MO D153, female, born 1912.
[445] MO D826, female, born 1950.
[446] MO A1292, female, born 1933.

> We know from his past that human lives mean little to Saddam Hussein, [evidenced by] his killing of the Kurds by chemical weapons, and… his reckless attacks on the Kuwaiti population.[447]

> …the people in Kuwait were experiencing terrible conditions, not only from bombings, but rape and pillage from the army who had invaded them. It sickened everyone who saw their plight.[448]

Observers' views on the Iraqi regime clearly affected what they believed to be a desirable outcome for the Gulf conflict itself. As suggested earlier in this chapter, many were discomfited by Hussein retaining his position in Iraq after the war, despite the narrower war aims identified by the coalition:

> The allies have done a marvellous job, but the problem now will be to stop Saddam Hussein from trying again. He must be made to pay for his crimes. Kuwait has been devastated and the environment damaged beyond belief. He still had our POWs (presuming they are still alive) and hundreds of Kuwaitis who have been rounded up and shifted out.[449]

Evidently, observers were keen to stress the otherness of Hussein's regime. They marked it out as particularly brutal, evidencing attacks on civilians in Kuwait and in Iraq. Though perspectives on the legitimacy of using military force against Iraq often varied, observers who discussed the Iraqi regime were wholly convinced that his leadership was illegitimate.

Hussein was of course, not to be taken lightly as an opponent and was thought by some observers to display a low cunning or opportunistic intelligence:

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[447] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[448] MO D2092, female, born 1919.
[449] MO C1786, female, born 1950.

Considering the forces and world opinion against him it is probably not surprising that he is only able to continue with the support from his own people by religious fervour mixed with political scheming. He is a master of the media coverage and a great tactician and I feel he is just playing with the responses of the West who have raised such a large and cumbersome war horse against him they cannot hope to keep pace without media bias.[450]

With a whole population ready to support their leader in what he has led them into and then add the ingredient of religious fervour, no doubt the populace is convinced that their God and leader have given them a special dispensation to create havoc. There seems little hope in trying to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means when the perpetrator has convinced himself and his people that it was right to do what he did.[451]

Another observer, previously critical of the use of military force against Iraq, was similarly unequivocal in placing blame for the current situation with Hussein's regime:

Having said that I don't believe we will suffer as the people in the Gulf will suffer, and all because of what seems to be a madman in charge of a country which has lots of oil, and having somehow won a war against Iran thought he could walk into that very small country of Kuwait and take over without any reaction from anyone else.[452]

Most observers, both critical and supportive of Britain's contribution to a military effort against Iraq, articulated a uniform narrative of illegitimate, aggressive dictatorship in relation to Iraq. Largely this was condensed to a focus on the person of Saddam Hussein who was described variously as a tyrant, despot, madman, and killer, and whose evil and aggressive ideology had been implemented through a mixture of brutal, totalitarian

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[450] MO A2464, male, born 1960.
[451] MO D2205, female, born 1929.
[452] MO A1223, female, born 1925.

control, opportunism and trickery. Western hostages, including "innocent children…
trapped [in Iraq]",[453] were identified as having suffered "very insanitary"[454] conditions
and faced a "terrible plight",[455] further confirming the appalling nature of Hussein's
regime.

Importantly, observers persistently characterised Saddam Hussein and the actions
of his regime as comparable to those of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany in the 1930s.
These observers interpreted Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by drawing on popular memories
of appeasement and Britain's eventual recourse to war in 1939.[456] One observer suggested
that "To compare Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler in his disregard for human life is a
very fair comment"[457] while others went into greater detail:

My immediate feelings after the seizure of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein was one of dismay. It
brought back memories of Hitler and German troops marching into the Rhineland and the demands
for Alsace-Lorraine. After Kuwait what would be Saddam Hussein's Austria and Sudetenland? I had
lived through these times and knew the danger of appeasement. I saw the President as another Hitler
who had to be stopped at all costs. I still do.[458]

Saddam Hussein is another Hitler. He has already proved that he would use any weapons, (gas
already used against Iranians and Kurds…); tell lies (he gave solemn promises to the Kuwaitis that
he would not invade about 48 hours before doings so); stoop to any trick (hostages indiscriminately
taken and places near the military etc. establishments as a 'human shield' against retaliatory strikes);

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[453] MO D2438, female, born 1924.
[454] MO C1786, female, born 1950.
[455] MO D153, female, born 1912.
[456] Observers' responses to the Gulf Crisis directive offer evidence for the ubiquitous figure of Adolf Hitler
as a prevailing representation of a British nemesis, and a continuing feature within the public imagination as
new conflicts and enemies arise. See: Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.
[457] MO C1043, male, born 1960.
[458] MO D1419, male, born 1923.

have erected stylised sentimental pictures and posters of himself everywhere; use cunning and lying propaganda which is nevertheless persuasive to the unintelligent and naïve.[459]

When confronted by the Gulf crisis observers focused on the nature of the Hussein regime at the expense of the specifics of its actual invasion of Kuwait. An important aspect of this discourse was the construction of an identity in which Saddam Hussein personally embodied a particularly unsavoury and brutal form of totalitarianism or dictatorship. Though observers who wrote about Argentinian Junta during the Falklands had described the occupation of the islands as typical of aggressive dictatorship, linked in some cases to 'fascism', observers writing about the Hussein regime were often more specific and visceral, focusing on the abhorrent nature of Hussein's personal leadership and his disregard for human life. His regime was marked out by observers not only as illegitimate or repellent, but often specifically as evil.

This particularly emotive and lucid characterisation was framed heavily by popular memories of Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler in particular. Observers were clearly disgusted by the use of chemical weapons and Iraq's aggression but they were also keen to assess more fundamentally the nature and identity of the regime which pursued them. Direct connection with Hitler both clarified what observers wrote about Saddam Hussein while further revealing the continuing explanatory power that popular memories of Britain's entry into the Second World War retained over the present. Unlike the previous conflict in the Falklands, observers focused heavily on Hussein rather than any 'fascist' ideology, thereby personifying the threat faced in the Gulf, and further centring their re-invocations of the Second World War on the figure of Adolf Hitler, considered a shorthand for evil. Both Hussein and Hitler were characterised by their otherness, conveyed a sense of British moderation, humanity, democracy and morality by contrast.

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[459] MO E1510, male, born 1926.

Thus the Gulf War also represented an opportunity for observers to re-invoke memories of Adolf Hitler, and reconstruct a narrative of British identity in which he took a prominent position. Observers rearticulated a pervasive and specific popular memory based on brutality, tyranny and evil. His post-War cultural ubiquity[460] was, as observers' responses show, driven at least partially by a desire to help explain the identity and illegitimacy of Britain's contemporary opponents and enemies. For most writing about the Gulf War past and present could be connected directly, forming part of a much broader reconstruction of a common British history centred on opposition to, and contrast with, totalitarianism and dictatorship, of which the identification of the Hussein regime was the latest manifestation. Hitler's status as a benchmark for evil was sustained, however partially, by the utility in helping to make sense of contemporary circumstances which observers ascribed to it.

Conclusions

The circumstances and context of Britain's involvement in the Gulf War were much different from those of the Falklands campaign. Observers were accordingly aware of the different situation and saw Britain's Gulf War as a singular and unique event which elicited a variety of individual views and opinions. Though observers were mostly in favour of military action, as those writing in 1982 had been, they were generally more ambivalent and uncertain about it, and they were keen to stress the far greater stakes thought to be involved in a potentially massive war in the Middle East. Likewise they were aware of, and considered at length, the fact that Britain was contributing to a broad,

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[460] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.

US-led coalition rather than pursuing a bi-lateral conflict against an opponent which had invaded British sovereign territory.

Yet observers again interpreted contemporary events, and gave meaning to them, by considering what they meant for *Britain*. Confronted by the possibility of death and sacrifice in war, they sought not only to describe events, but to evaluate what British involvement revealed about Britain's national identity. They were, as in all cases I consider, particularly concerned about the political and moral legitimacy of the use of military force. As in 1982, observers sought to invoke popular memories which could help explain present circumstances more clearly. The contemporary conflict in the Persian Gulf was frequently incorporated into a much broader historical narrative – most often focused on the Second World War - which could help clarify why Britain was fighting, and whether it was right or wrong. Many believed that contemporary conditions could be directly associated within the legitimate military struggle against Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Those who objected did not do so on pacifist grounds, or as a stance against neo-imperialism; they were instead far more likely to suggest that war against Iraq didn't meet standards of legitimate defence. Though some observers described the Gulf War as a particularly complex conflict, and did not clarify their arguments by drawing on popular memories, a greater number did make sense of present conditions by referring to a celebrated and morally assured narrative of historical British identity. The Second World War remained ubiquitous despite its temporal distance and the apparent complicating factors associated with the Gulf campaign specifically.

As in 1982, many observers were old enough to have lived through the Second World War, thus it emerged as a specific marker of their own generational identity.[461] Yet personal memories were generally articulated as part of a broader reference to popular

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[461] Summerfield, "The generation of memory".

memory. Only when some observers came to imagine combat conditions in Iraq and Kuwait did personal experience of bereavement and wartime trauma figured their reactions. Mostly observers were concerned with incorporating the Gulf conflict into a *national* story, their personal experiences essentially lending greater weight to the arguments they were making about *British* experiences. Observers referred overwhelming to popular memories related specifically to Britain's morally assured and legitimate entry into the Second World War, the failure of appeasement and the 'evil' of Nazism and Adolf Hitler. When observers recalled Neville Chamberlain's return from Munich they were drawing on personal experience in order to build a convincing narrative of British history. This re-invocation of *popular* memories specifically helped to explain present circumstances by association, and provided a guide to action in the present. The use of military force against Saddam Hussein – invariably cast as a 'new Hitler' – was in many cases supported at least partially because of a fear of appeasing a dictator or Britain allowing him "to get away with it."[462]

Thus, the specific conditions of the Gulf crisis, and the course of the subsequent war, determined the manner in which observers drew on these popular memories of Britain's past. Indeed, the Gulf conflict occurred at an important juncture in British and world history at the end of the Cold War,[463] and it is quite clear the possibility of massive escalation of conflagration in the Middle East was informed by what observers knew or remembered about Cold War security and Mutually Assured Destruction. The rapid, conventional end to the conflict undermined the validity of such comparisons, making them seem absurd in retrospect. By contrast, observers' persistent efforts to define the legitimacy of Britain's Gulf campaign engendered a focus on *why* Britain had become involved in World War Two, at the expense of memories of its constituent military events

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[462] MO D2092, female, born 1919.

[463] For a consideration of the Gulf War within the context of the end of the global Cold War, see, for example: Cronin, *Global Rules*, 207-216.

or the subsequent Cold War. As Dan Stone has argued, the post-Cold War era has seen the re-emergence of 'memory battles' related to the Second World War, at a point in which it begins to fade from living memory.[464] The specifics and particularities of British involvement in the Gulf War mark an important point of departure among collected responses in which popular memory of the Cold War security struggle gave way in totality to a much broader and pervasive focus on the Second World War, one which would be reinforced in subsequent conflicts also.

Thus, observers reconstructed a specific narrative of Britain's past in a similar manner to those observers who had attempted to explain Britain's experience in the Falklands campaign. They reaffirmed a morally secure narrative of legitimate defence against Nazi aggression in the Second World War – focused more heavily on the person of Adolf Hitler rather than a broader reference to 'fascism' - and, whether they believed the use of force against Iraq was fully legitimate or not, they incorporated the Gulf War within this broader understanding of Britain as a legitimate military power, and a force for good. Entry into the Second World War – reconstructing as a moral failure to confront determined aggression - served both as a benchmark for assessing the legitimacy of using force in the present and as a crucible for representations of Britain's broader identity as a national community. In evaluating Britain's role in Desert Storm, observers not only created a sense of national identity in the present, but also reconstructed a much broader narrative of historical identity based on British involvement in events that occurred in the further past.

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[464] Stone, *Goodbye To All That*, 265-289.

The Kosovo War 1999

The war in Kosovo, like those that occurred in neighbouring Croatia and Bosnia, involved the mobilisation of paramilitary forces and the prosecution of violence along ethnic, religious and national lines. However, the conflict, and consequent NATO involvement, was linked fundamentally to the politics of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia and the end of the Tito regime. Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power first as President of Serbia, and then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY),[465] was based on a commitment to protect ethnic Serbs within other republics and autonomous regions who were thought to be oppressed or disenfranchised,[466] and involved the mobilisation of an identity politics in which Kosovo was represented as a crucible of Serbian nationhood.[467] This led to the dissolution of Kosovan autonomy and the imposition of Serbian control in 1990,[468] engendering an increasingly violent civil conflict in Kosovo and resistance from organised military and civilian groups among the Kosovar Albanian population.[469] With the collapse of the neighbouring Albanian government in 1997 the Kosovo War accelerated quickly as weapons were moved freely across the border. Ultimately, while the conflict took on the characteristics of a conflict between competing ethnic groups, it is important to state that the war was the result of the political transformation of the

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[465] I refer throughout this chapter to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the title given to the successor state to the previous Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia after the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While Serbian nationalism was a catalyst for the Yugoslav wars it would be incorrect to suggest that it was 'Serbia' that carried out military actions in Kosovo (though of course much of it was undertaken by Serbian paramilitaries), despite NATO's intervention being focused primarily in that region. Instead, Slobodan Milosevic was, in 1999, President of the FRY, directed the use of the FRY's military (though of course, dominated by Serbian personnel) and it was the FRY that was referred to in the subsequent UN Resolution 1244 following the war.

[466] See: Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (London: Yale University Press, 2000); Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[467] Finney, "On Memory".

[468] Judah, *What Everyone Needs to Know*.

[469] For a discussion of the origins of the Kosovo Liberation Army within the broader context of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo War, see: Keiichi Kubo, "Why Kosovar Albanians Took Up Arms against the Serbian Regime", *Europe-Asia Studies*. 62, no. 7 (2010): 1135-1152.

previous decades, and was intimately bound up in the unstable collapse of communism in both the states of the former Yugoslavia, the wider Balkan region and the world.

NATO's intervention was thus initiated as a reaction to escalating violence within Kosovo with concerns about the possibility of genocide or 'ethnic cleansing' made more urgent by recent events in the Balkans. Indeed, the NATO campaign in Kosovo was the result of a turn in both North America and Western Europe toward 'ethical' or humanitarian foreign policy, a process itself driven by the perceived failure of non-interventions in the initial Bosnian conflict from 1992 and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.[470] Confronted by increasingly brutal abuses by the FRY military and Serbian militias – such as the massacre at Racak in January 1999 in which over forty Kosovar Albanians were killed by the FRY Special Anti-Terror Unit[471] – NATO states embarked on a military intervention against the FRY, codenamed Operation Allied Force, which involved a campaign of aerial bombardment targeting military and civilian infrastructure across Serbia and, for some time, Montenegro. Allied Force lasted until 10 June 1999 until the FRY regime capitulated and withdrew under the terms of a ceasefire in which NATO forces, as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR), entered the region as peacekeepers.[472] Unlike the previous Falklands and Gulf Wars, British forces did not engage in ground warfare before the ceasefire. Likewise the intervention itself was associated closely with ideas of humanitarian intervention and ethical foreign policy

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[470] For a brief consideration of humanitarian intervention in the context of the New Labour government's foreign policy, see: Gaskarth, "Discourses and Ethics"; Gaskarth, "Interpreting Ethical Foreign Policy"; Holland, "Blair's War on Terror"; Dan Keohane, "The United Kingdom", in *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics*, edited by Alex Danchev and John MacMillan (London: Routledge, 2005); David McCourt, "Embracing Humanitarian Intervention".
For a consideration of the origins and outcome of the Kosovo conflict itself, see: Christopher Greenwood, "Humanitarian intervention: the case of Kosovo", *Finnish yearbook of international law*. 10, no. 1 (2002): 141-176; Robert H. Gregory, *Clean Bombs and Dirty Wars* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015)
[471] See: John Silverman, "Racak massacre haunts Milosevic trial", *BBC News*, 2002. Online, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1812847.stm (Accessed 18-04-2018).
[472] For a more detailed discussion of Allied Force and its place within the broader regional and global context, see: Andrew Cottey, "The Kosovo War in Perspective", *International Affairs*. 85, no. 3 (2009) 593-608.

which had little precedent those earlier conflicts. The Kosovo War did not result from an attack on one state against another but was instead an active intervention, within a single sovereign state, aimed at protecting civilians from violence.[473] Once again, within Mass Observation responses, these specific circumstances were both framed by, and contributed to, broader narratives of Britain's contemporary identity and the invocation of popular memories of the past.

I consider in this chapter responses from forty-eight observers to the spring 1999 sub-directive titled "Current Issues" which asked observers to record their thoughts on "contemporary issues" including, despite the conclusion of armed conflict after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995, "Kosova and the war in Bosnia".[474] The directive was issued in mid-March 1999, just days before the beginning of Allied Force. The less prominent status of the Kosovo intervention relative to the other conflicts I have considered in this thesis is evidenced by its subordinate position within the MOP hierarchy (lacking a dedicated directive like the previous Falklands and Gulf wars) and the comparatively smaller number of observers (239 individuals) who wrote responses about it.

However, those observers who did write about the Kosovo War were engaged in detailed and intense discussion of the conflict, and were often well informed. The primary difference between responses written in 1999 and those submitted to previous directives is the lack of a significant number written before the opening of combat operations during a preceding 'crisis period'. By the time that observers were writing about it, Britain had a defined policy of intervention and, unless they responded immediately on receipt of the

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[473] For an overview of the various debates triggered by NATO's intervention in Kosovo, see the edited collection: Michael Waller, Kyril Drezov and Bulent Gokay (eds.), *Kosovo: The Politics of Delusion* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

[474] See Appendix II. The allusion to Bosnia is perplexing. Whether the inclusion of Bosnia here was a mistake or a deliberate attempt to prompt observers to place the current crisis in the context of the previous is impossible to establish. Observers were however, focused on the conflict in Kosovo and were mostly aware that it pertained to a different conflict outside of Bosnia.

directive, Operation Allied Force was already underway. Their accounts were received by the MOP mainly between March and June 1999, and while they focused on many of the same themes that were apparent among responses to previous and subsequent directives – the legitimacy of British action, the nature of the combat, leadership, allies and enemies – they were writing about an ongoing operation or about one that had recently ended.

Observers identified the circumstances of the Kosovo War and were aware that the possibility of 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide in Kosovo was particularly urgent, framed heavily by genocide in the Balkans and Rwanda immediately previously. However, in contrast to the previous Falklands War in particular, many were unsure about or critical of the legitimacy of Allied Force. They frequently characterised the violence in Kosovo as the result of intractable or perennial ethnic conflict. The situation was for some, compounded by a perceived heavy-handed and ineffective bombing campaign undertaken by NATO. The absence of ground forces meant there was little sense of celebration, victory or triumph in observers' responses.

As a proportion of those considered in this chapter, fewer observers had been alive during the Second World War than among those who had written in response to the Falklands and Gulf directives. Of the forty-eight observers considered here, thirty were born before 1940 and nineteen were born before 1930, meaning those with memories of the Second World War as children or teenagers were in a minority. Yet popular memories were invoked in order to help explain British involvement in another military conflict both by those who could claim to be drawing on lived experience and those without. Further, it is possible to see among their responses how the specific context of the Kosovo intervention helped to determine which narratives of Britain's past experience remained relevant. The possibility of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo meant observers were more likely to invoke Holocaust rather than the expansionism or irredentism of Nazi Germany to help

explain circumstances in the present. For some this framing formed part of an interpretation of the Kosovo conflict as a complex and intractable situation that military intervention could worsen. For others it leant weight to support for military intervention to avoid such horrors. However, frequent invocation of Britain's Blitz compounded a sense that the military strategy adopted within Allied Force was not congruent with celebrated aspects of Britain's Second World War history. Observers focused primarily on the perceived devastation wrought by bombing rather than any successes achieved by brave or heroic pilots,[475] or indeed, the martial heroism of British ground forces. The invocation of popular memories of relevant aspects of the war once again helped to clarify the contemporary situation but could, importantly, be used to undermined or subvert Britain's policy and position in the present. While observers were not wholly enthusiastic about the use of military force in Kosovo, in many cases British involvement in a military conflict nevertheless contributed to the construction and reconstruction of certain narratives of identity, and the re-invocation of a secure and morally assured military history heavily invested in the absolute legitimacy of the effort to defeat Nazi Germany.

Legitimacy

As in all cases, observers were concerned with establishing the legitimacy of Britain's part in the military intervention in Kosovo. However, a minority of observers – twelve of the forty-eight observers considered in this chapter - believed military intervention in Kosovo had been justified, primarily as a humanitarian operation aimed at protecting

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[475] Francis, *The Flyer*.

Kosovar Albanians. One observer offered a typical account, writing after the NATO campaign:

> I have no doubt that NATO's action in attacking [the Federal Republic of] Yugoslavia by air was correct... However, I have strong doubts as to whether Milosevic will speedily agree to withdraw his forces from Kosovo, and while he does not, the Albanian people of that province are being terrorised and slaughtered.[476]

Again, another observer described how she had supported the Blair government's decision to use military force. The humanitarian strife seen in Kosovo was evidence of the tyrannical actions of FRY regime:

> It was so upsetting to see the rows of bodies of people massacred the heartbroken wives and children, the villages razed to the ground. I felt as Tony Blair did that we must hurry and stop them whatever it takes… Many people have asked why we had to get involved in the area but the thing is – do you just let tyrants get on with it and do what they want or do you do something about it?[477]

Evidently, observers who supported the military campaign in Kosovo characterised it as an effort to stop the brutal violence prosecuted by the FRY regime. Allusions to letting 'tyrants get on with it' revealed again the extent to which intervention was framed by a broader understanding of appeasement, reconstructed as failure to deal with an enemy soon enough. Yet this interpretation remained flexible. Where previous responses concerning the Falklands and Gulf conflicts were centred on resistance to *territorial* expansion, in Kosovo observers were concerned instead about escalating violence.

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[476] MO B1989, male, born 1927.
[477] MO C1713, female, born 1948.

Another observer offered a detailed and passionate argument for military action in Kosovo focused on the human suffering of Kosovar Albanians. Perceived arguments against military intervention were deconstructed, critiqued and derided:

Several people I talked to would say things like 'oh I don't think war is the answer, I think we should use sanctions against Serbia.' I pointed out to them that sanctions were already in operation against Iraq, since the war to liberate Kuwait, and were now being opposed by many 'humanitarians' because the innocent Iraqi people were being adversely affected whilst the country's leadership continue to live in the lap of luxury. Such limp anti-war sentiments annoyed me because these people have no real idea what to do about determined military aggression, beyond a woolly 1960s 'war is bad' attitude. Their one realistic alternative to war, economic sanctions, has been significantly discredited by our experience of sanctions against Iraq. So nowadays they're reduced to blaming Britain/NATO/the UN for not anticipating the original aggression and somehow heading it off diplomatically. Of course war is a filthy, disgusting and degrading activity. But sometimes it's the only alternative to allowing the bad guys to flourish.[478]

Observers who supported military intervention in Kosovo, as in all cases, were often keen to stress that they did not approve of war or military violence. They believed that the use of force must be a last resort, and must only be used when an opponent could not be countered through peaceful means. Though the wars in the former Yugoslavia were considered to be brutal and complex – something discussed in more detail shortly – observers who were in favour of a military campaign against the Milosevic regime saw Britain's role in stark terms with a clear moral imperative.

For another observer, this moral clarity was articulated by invoking popular memories focused on the 'evil' of the Nazis, and Britain's legitimate resistance to it. She criticised those who complained about "how awful the [Milosevic] regime is" but wanted

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[478] MO C2865, male, born 1957.

"Milosevic deposed as long as someone else does it for them",[479] going on to explain her support for intervention in Kosovo by reconstructing a narrative centred on the failure of Britain's pre-Second World War policy of appeasement:

> This whole attitude [of opposing intervention] is reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain and his pieces of paper. Murdering butchers don't understand diplomacy. They mistake it for weakness and at least our message to Milosevic must be that we are not fools and we will not stand by and allow him to mastermind another holocaust. Perhaps if Neville Chamberlain and those like him had not taken the word of a murdering thug, there might not have been the senseless carnage that there was in the 1930s and 40s.[480]

As a military intervention in Kosovo drew near, observers attempted to make sense of Britain's identity within it by drawing on, and recreating, specific narratives of British involvement in World War Two. For the observer quoted above, the apparent failure of appeasement prescribed action in the present, and was underscored by a tacit belief in the similarity between Milosevic and the 'murdering thug', Adolf Hitler. By association, Milosevic's regime seemed more clearly to represent a legitimate threat against which Britain was justified in deploying force. For an observer born after the Second World War, popular memories framed the contemporary situation, offering a guide to action against Milosevic,[481] but also permitting the reconstruction of a broader narrative of British resistance to brutality and aggression.

It is important to note however, that observers were fully aware of the specifically humanitarian context of the Kosovo intervention. For some observers, legitimacy was

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[479] MO E2836, female, born 1950.
[480] MO E2836, female, born 1950.
[481] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.

assured only by logically considering how civilians facing violence in the region could be helped:

> There are two questions; 1) should Europe try to find an answer to stop the persecution? 2) Is military intervention justified? The answer to question 1) as put is easy. However if peaceful intervention is unsuccessful should the effort be called off and the people of Kosovo be left to their fate, even though it has been agreed that the situation is intolerable? This leads to Q2. In terms of logic from Q1 the answer must be no. However that presupposes that although negotiations have failed, force will succeed. There is little ground for hope along this line. Short term negotiations (that word again) after military retreat may produce short term solutions, but how long will it last? It is therefore a no win situation in which the main opponent has played a cunning game and one in which he may have further surprises.[482]

Some observers ascribed the legitimacy of the Kosovo intervention solely to its humanitarian character. For one, the current conflict could be contrasted with the perceived realpolitik of the previous Gulf conflict:

> I am generally a pacifist, and when there was the Gulf War I was highly suspicious that the involvement of Britain and the USA was motivated by concerns about the oil supply, but in the case of Kosovo I think it is obvious that there were only humanitarian reasons for NATO going to war with the Serbs… I have been shocked to see so many liberal-minded people opposed to NATO intervention, writing letters to The Guardian in protest… I do not approve of war, but in this particular case I do not see that it could have been avoided.[483]

Another described explicitly their belief that military intervention could not be justified purely as a humanitarian operation, citing the violence of the previous Bosnian war:

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[482] MO W1893, male, born 1924.
[483] MO A2212, female, born 1956.

I hate war but since the last Bosnian war I stopped being a pacifist as I think self-defence is a sad necessity as it is defending those unable to defend themselves. It is wrong in my view to sit back and watch others violate others. Yet I thought what about Rwanda? Kurdistan? East Timor? Sierra Leone? Etc. Who is helping the people there?[484]

Observers characterised the Kosovo intervention as one aimed at protecting civilians and preventing violence against innocent people. These circumstances were often understood through the invocation of memories of the past which were thought to retain an explanatory power, but they also dictated which popular memories were referred to. For those who supported intervention, ethnic cleansing and genocide could be understood by invoking the Holocaust. The association both framed the contemporary violence as particularly disgusting and evil,[485] providing a moral imperative for intervention, but also recreated a sense that Britain remained continuously opposed to such brutality.[486] One observer wrote, "The more I see and hear of the crisis in that area the more I am reminded of the horrors of the Nazi regime in the 30s and 40s"[487] while another explained that "The persecution of the Albanian Kosovans was totally unacceptable and can only be compared to the Nazi persecution of the Jews."[488] Other observers further expanded the point:

Kosovo and the war in Bosnia is just another terrible case of 'man's inhumanity to man'. We thought that the World War Two treatment of the Jews was dreadful but here we are again with people being persecuted for their religion.[489]

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[484] MO B2810, female, born 1967.
[485] Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust*, 18.
[486] Thomas J. McKay, "A multi-generational oral history study considering English collective memory of the Second World War and Holocaust", PhD dissertation (University of Leicester, Leicester, 2012).
[487] MO A2848, male, born 1958.
[488] MO A2212, female, born 1956.
[489] MO A1733, female, born 1928.

The cruelty was something akin to Hitler and his attempts to get rid of the Jewish people. I thought

have we learned nothing in the past 50 years? It's happening all over again.[490]

During both the Falklands and Gulf wars, observers writing about those conflicts rarely alluded to the Holocaust specifically, focusing instead on popular memories of Nazi militarism and aggressive expansionism against other European states. The nature of the conflicts in the Balkans and Kosovo, entailing ethnic cleansing and genocide, and lacking *inter*-state conflict, prompted observers to recall circumstances that were thought to provide an explanation for the contemporary violence. Though none of these observers suggested that Britain fought World War Two in order to stop the Holocaust, its identification as a 'touchstone'[491] for evil once more reinforced a pervasive belief in Britain's moral and legitimate resistance to Nazi Germany, thereby reconstructing a specific narrative of British identity based on resistance to brutality, tyranny and evil.

Indeed, an intervention in Kosovo aimed solely at the protection of civilians represented a departure from previous British conflicts, challenging the instinctively critical position adopted by some observers. Contemporary circumstances and what observers knew about them drove their conclusions on the appropriateness of the use of British force. Yet all of these individuals were interested in establishing whether Britain was acting in the *defensive*, be it against the aggressions of a brutal FRY regime, or in the defence of innocent civilians who could not defend themselves. Allusions to ethnic cleansing, genocide and the Holocaust were indicative of the changed context of the Kosovo War when compared to the previous Falklands and Gulf conflicts, but they also formed part of a familiar construction of a broader British identity,[492] coloured by a

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[490] MO B1713, female, born 1948.
[491] Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust*, 18.
[492] McKay "English collective memory".

defensive posture and resistance to extremism and aggression, that could be read in responses written in relation to previous (and subsequent) cases.

Importantly however, a majority of observers who wrote about British involvement in Kosovo believed it was not a justified use of military force. Twenty-five of the forty-eight observers considered in this chapter described an illegitimate military intervention. Some objected on the grounds that military force would be too destructive and would make an already desperate situation worse. They wrote variously that Allied Force "only exacerbated the situation",[493] that it "did nothing but stir up more hatred",[494] or that it was "completely unjustifiable and merely made a bad situation worse".[495] Another observer, who had written previously of his support for a military intervention against Iraq in 1990, wrote:

> The firing of houses which serves no purpose at all; it is just vandalism, the senseless bombing by NATO of useful buildings and bridges that the ordinary Serbs use, bombing that can only have made matters worse, the list is endless… I am more opposed every day the bombing continues… I was against military action, and still think it was a distasteful and costly and unnecessary fiasco. Billions of pounds worth of damage, the R. Danube closed to trade affecting several countries not in any way involved.[496]

For another observer, the identification of Slobodan Milosevic as a pariah during the crisis, an aspect of responses returned to shortly, did not mean that military intervention could be justified:

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[493] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[494] MO C2570, female, born 1921.
[495] MO C602, female, born 1922.
[496] MO A883, male, born 1933.

I and many of my friends feel that the air strikes in Kosovo will prove to be a ghastly and expensive mistake. So, Milosevic is a wicked man, but there have been many others since 1945, when NATO and others have stood by, or in the case of the United States interfered with awful results, e.g. Vietnam and Somalia.[497]

These observers were aware of what had occurred in Kosovo and the wider region, and they were aware of the humanitarian principles on which Allied Force had been based. However, they did not think this form of conflict was justified or could be effective, given that it involved further destruction and a potential threat to the civilians it was aimed at protecting. This is particularly apparent among observers' discussions of the NATO bombing campaign, considered in more detail shortly.

It is interesting to note further that the latter extract again involved invocation of the past as a frame for the present and that the wars in Vietnam and Somalia were considered to have been failures. The intervention in Kosovo was not considered in light of previous *British* conflicts, but represented as part of a narrative of unjustified or failed American interventions, suggesting that even observers who steadfastly rejected British involvement in the Kosovo War were unlikely to construct a narrative of British historical failures or abuses. Indeed, this does not occur meaningfully within responses submitted to any of the directives I have considered. Observers, even those who were highly critical of British involvement in Allied Force, were reluctant to question the legitimate history of British military action.

Like those who supported the intervention, these observers made sense of the conflict by creating a narrative of British identity, and were worried not only about the effects of using military force, but also that this destruction suggested Britain was contributing to violence and strife. Some were uncomfortable with Britain's pro-active

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[497] MO H266, female, born 1923.

and interventionist identity in 1999. However, no observers suggested that force could *never* be justified. As I argue throughout this research, most writing about recent conflicts were comfortable with Britain's historical identity as a military power and the possibility that it could be involved in armed conflict.

Though some were evidently concerned by the destruction wrought by Allied Force – a familiar objection among responses submitted to previous directives - a far greater proportion of observers objected to British intervention in Kosovo when compared to previous cohorts writing about the Falklands and Gulf wars. This is explained primarily by a large group of observers writing in 1999 who characterised Allied Force specifically as an intervention into the 'internal' affairs of another state. They were keen to stress that neither Britain, its allies, nor neighbouring states had been attacked by the FRY. They did not object to the use of force on the grounds that it was destructive or violent, rather it was thought to be politically unjustifiable. The lack of an expansionary or irredentist threat to Britain foregrounded a response from one observer:

> While Slobodan Milosevic is an evil man, this was an internal conflict in what is legally all Yugoslavia... Also I don't agree with British lives being lost for a cause which doesn't threaten this country at all. NATO was supposed to be a defensive force, and now our airmen are involved without Britain knowing how long the conflict will last and if air power fails, as looks likely, our troops will be involved.[498]

Ultimately Allied Force cost no British personnel their lives.[499] Yet observers writing before the defeat of the FRY could not know how long it would last, or whether ground

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[498] MO B2605, female, born 1931.
[499] British military personnel were killed as part of the peace-keeping operation thereafter. The first two British military fatalities occurred during a mine clearing operation on 21 June 1991, eleven days after Allied Force ended. The British government records fatalities in 'the Balkans', including both Bosnia and Kosovo. Between 1993 and 2015 seventy two British military personnel have been killed, thirteen in 'hostile action'. None have been killed by the forces of the FRY. See: Ministry of Defence, "UK Armed

forces would be deployed. The possibility of British fatalities drew attention to the legitimacy of the conflict but also revealed more about how observers identified Britain within it. They were willing to countenance the sacrifice of British soldiers only if a legitimate narrative of defence could be established.

Indeed, other observers represented Allied Force as a NATO operation that contravened its own charter:

> The dangerous and ill-considered bombing by NATO has been a disaster. In the first place, NATO is by constitution a defensive organisation of nineteen countries, not one of which has been attacked by Serbia. Because the USA and UK knew full well that the United Nations would not sanction such attacks on a sovereign country, it was decided that NATO would break its own constitution and launch attacks. The excuse used was that 'humanitarian concerns' over-rode other factors. The hypocrisy involved is startling, when one thinks of many other similar conflicts in other parts of the world have been ignored.[500]

> I was under the impression that NATO was formed to protect us and I'm all for that but no other country was threatened, it was a conflict (and still is) between Serbia and Albanians (*sic*). Greece, Italy and ourselves were not threatened (I think what I'm trying to say is that I thought NATO was a defence force?).[501]

Again, observers were not critical of NATO, its military structures or Britain's contribution to it. They were instead critical of the specific operation undertaken in 1999. Allusions to NATO's constitution as a 'defensive' organisation seemed to not only undermine the logic behind a NATO-led military intervention outside of the borders of its

Forces Operational Deaths Post World War II", 2015. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416474/20150326_UK_Armed_Forces_Operational_deaths_post_World_War_II_O.pdf (Accessed, 16-02-2018).
[500] MO H2639, female, born 1940.
[501] MO C1939, female, born 1939.

member states, but also defined Britain's place in the world by its involvement in organisations and institutions that were based on collective defence against an external threat.

Other observers focused on the principle of national sovereignty as a marker for the conflict's legitimacy. For one, humanitarian intervention in Kosovo was characterised as a knee-jerk and emotional reaction, fuelled by the cultural and technological context of the period:

> I find it incomprehensible that so called intelligent, educated people should intervene in another sovereign nation's policies. Before the advent of instant communications, especially the television, no British Prime Minister would have done such a thing. I do not watch television but I see carefully posed pictures in the daily paper we take – the Telegraph – deliberately designed to tug at ignorant peoples' heart strings.[502]

The absence of a legitimising argument for intervention against the FRY was clarified by comparison with a previous case by another:

> The Falklands conflict was a different matter because it was British territory that the services were defending. I know that this is Europe but it's really a civil war between the different peoples of Yugoslavia.[503]

The Falklands War was recalled as an instance of legitimate defence of British territory; an interpretation that became increasingly prevalent among observers' responses to later conflicts considered in this research. Despite the current campaign lacking justification or legitimacy, this observer was able to refer to historical instances in which Britain's

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[502] MO W2588, female, born 1923.
[503] MO H2639, female, born 1940.

identity as a force for good was assured. Contested legitimacy in the present could be articulated within a broader narrative of British national or military identity which was thought to be more secure and rooted in a belief in Britain's history as a force for good. This is a striking feature of responses to later directives as observers became collectively more critical of British military campaigns, particularly that in Iraq from 2003.

Importantly however, unlike those above, some observers were unsure about whether Allied Force was a justified use of military force or not. As in responses concerned with the previous Gulf War, a significant number of observers – eleven of the forty-eight considered here - did not offer a definitive conclusion on the intervention's legitimacy. Further, like those responses written in 1990/1991, this was not because observers were unaware of or failed to comprehend the issues they were writing about. In fact, many were aware of the regional context in the Balkans and of Britain's foreign policy. There was instead a pervasive sense among collected responses that the strife encountered in the Balkan region, including the crisis in Kosovo, was perennial and intractable. Their characterisations of the region contributed to confusion and torment over whether to intervene militarily. Observers wrote variously that "It [the Balkan region] has always been a volatile area of the world",[504] that "The Balkans has long been an unsettled area… and is currently an example of an unnatural alliance, the former Yugoslavia, falling apart",[505] and that "They [the Balkan peoples] fight because the men have always fought… All the Balkan countries settle their disputes with uncaring brutality, that's how they are, always have been."[506] The narrative was detailed by another:

Tribal friction from time immemorial was the start of all this trouble, it is easy to understand how

[504] MO A2801, female, born 1965.
[505] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[506] MO A883, male, born 1933.

groups of people who have lived isolated together for centuries are being dominated by other groups they encounter. This region was especially subject to this as it is the boundary of Europe and Asia and has a mixture of many ethnic groups, Huns, Goths, Mongols, Vandals to name but a few, all settling in an area with natural barriers keeping them uneasily apart.[507]

Often observers were simply appalled at the level of brutality seen in Kosovo and the Balkan region more broadly, and described being unable to rationalise or make sense of it. This violence was particularly shocking given it was taking place in Europe and so close to 'civilised' Britain:

> We are only a few hundred miles from the former Yugoslavia yet it seems centuries ahead in civilisation. Still raping and pillaging as in days of yore. One band of peoples displacing another when they are near neighbours.[508]

> This war in Kosovo is to me a most unbelievable thing in this day and age. For civilized people to rape and murder on such a scale in this day and age is unbelievable to me. Religion is just an excuse in my opinion and there is no excuse for murdering innocent people at all.[509]

> It's almost unbelievable that these appalling things are happening so close to us and so close to the 21st century. I can't make sense of all the hatred and brutality shown to the people of Kosovo.[510]

Of course, this portrayal of the Balkan region and the various ethnic groups inhabiting it was not created during the 1990s. The eruption of violent conflict after the break-up of the Yugoslav state did however act as a catalyst for the articulation of these familiar

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[507] MO H1541, male, born 1944.
[508] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[509] MO B736, female, born 1918.
[510] MO A2801, female, born 1965.

tropes.[511] Amid the unsettling confusion of Britain's entry into the Balkan wars, observers turned to stereotypical descriptions of innate conflict and savagery which seemed to explain the contemporary violence. The possibility of military intervention leant greater urgency to their assessments, even among those who were unsure about whether it was right or wrong, resulting frequently in the construction of a stereotyped Balkan Other.[512] At the heart of this process of interpretation was an underlying narrative in which Britain was considered safe, humane and civilised by comparison with the uncontrolled, barbaric violence of 'the Balkans'.

For these observers the perennial and brutal violence occurring in Kosovo undermined the possibility of British intervention; the region was inscrutable and its problems unsolvable. Indeed, for one observer, the nature of both Balkan society and the violence witnessed in the FRY made it impossible to decide on the legitimacy of Allied Force:

> What will happen when the 'foreign' troops now overseeing the 'peace' are eventually withdrawn? How does one take a 'Balkan' situation and resolve the ethnic and religious mixes which had been problematic for centuries? If these military interventions stop the fighting will they have produced more complications than they solve? Borders are never clear cut, people of the various cultures live 'cross border' and can feel isolated.[513]

Other observers wrote about having "very mixed feelings about the whole thing"[514] and that "whatever we do it seems we can't win."[515] One described further:

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[511] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[512] The prosecution of military conflicts by western states involvements 'identity investments' in which a sense of self can be constructed by contrast to those against whom, or on whose behalf, Western forces are fighting. See: Barkawi, "'Small Wars'".
[513] MO W1893, male, born 1924.
[514] MO W1923, female, born 1938.
[515] MO W2267, female, born 1926.

> Not that I am taking sides in this dispute, I do not know enough to comment on who had right on their side. I merely feel that it is so sad that a country which seemed stable for so long could erupt in civil war so easily… As for the intervention of the United Nations (*sic*), USA and Britain etc. I am not sure whether the situation is not worsened by their presence, if only by prolonging the conflict… I'm afraid the whole business is extremely depressing.[516]

For these observers, intervention in Kosovo was complex and, importantly, was not framed by persistent reference to Britain's Second World War. These observers were both unsure of whether it was right for Britain to become involved in the war in the first place and, for those writing after Allied Force, whether it had achieved anything of worth. It was thus difficult to describe the conflict as either conforming to a particular narrative of British identity, be it rooted in the legitimacy of principled, defensive military action, or as incongruent with it. Yet merely the possibility of military force and the eruption of a crisis in which Britain might be involved elicited a characterisation of a Balkan Other and engendered a process of othering in which much broader, abstract ideas of civilisation and modernity could be ascribed by putative contrast.[517]

Observers were not of course, apathetic. Failure to arrive at a narrative of legitimacy could often appear to be torturous for those trying to make sense of the conflict:

> I know that in the end many people will die in this conflict, and I also know that bullies need to be dealt with, but it is as if we have learnt nothing over the past hundreds of years, if the only way we can try to bring about some sort of resolution to this crisis is by war. I have no alternative ideas however, and just hope that this tragedy is over soon and the people can live together again.[518]

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[516] MO H1820, female, born 1955.
[517] Barkawi, "'Small Wars'", 128.
[518] MO H1745, female, born 1951.

It is hard to know what is happening in Kosovo. How can one man (Milosevic) be the cause of so much suffering inflicted on the Kosovo Albanians. I got a similar feeling of helplessness that I had, and have with Rwanda. Human nature seems to go berserk. Having said that, I have no answer. On principle I am against war and killing and uneasy with arguments for 'just war.[519]

Like all observers, these individuals understood the legitimacy of the Kosovo intervention by, I suggest, attempting to establish a coherent narrative of Britain's identity within it. This difficulty in arriving at a conclusion on its legitimacy was rarely a feature of responses to the previous Falklands directive which had more frequently been directly incorporated within a narrative of British identity as a bulwark against aggressive expansion. Observers who were equivocal about British intervention in Kosovo were so not only because of the apparently complex and unclear nature of the politics underlying the Balkan conflicts, but also because humanitarian intervention represented a challenge to an underlying belief in the legitimacy of defence, and Britain's identity as a nation that acted only in defence against aggression.

In fact, strikingly, references to previous conflicts - most notably the Second World War - are conspicuous by their absence within these latter responses. Unlike those who fully supported or rejected the legitimacy of Allied Force, observers here did not widely draw on popular memories of Britain's experience of past wars, and thus did not suggest that the Kosovo intervention could be considered in light of any specifically British experiences in past crises or conflicts. Popular memories helped observers to clarify contemporary events through similarity, association or contrast. In cases where they were not thought relevant, and remained unarticulated, ambiguity and indecision resulted from a failure to narrate the current operation clearly within a broader, British history.

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[519] MO W2529, male, born 1925.

Ultimately however, the majority of observers who wrote about the Kosovo conflict were quite certain about its legitimacy or lack thereof. Within that majority, British involvement in Allied Force was supported by fewer observers when compared to the larger number who believed that it was an unjustified use of British force. As with all cases I consider in this research, very few observers objected to the use of British force out of hand, or because military force itself was too destructive to countenance. Instead, the possibility of a humanitarian intervention within a sovereign state - lacking pre-existing invasion across national boundaries on the part of the FRY regime - was difficult for many to reconcile with a pervasive belief that Britain should only use force when a legitimate, aggressive threat could be established. While for some the possibility of ethnic cleansing and genocide represented such a threat, for most neither Britain, NATO allies, nor any other states in the region had been affected directly consequently rendering any military campaign intrusive and unjustified.

Though they were not, by comparison, as supportive as previous cohorts of observers had been when writing about the Falklands and Gulf wars, those who wrote about the Kosovo intervention did invoke popular memories related to the Second World War, albeit focused on aspects that were thought to retain the most explanatory power over the present. Invocation of the Holocaust was a salient feature for observers seeking to make sense of 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide. For some, direct association between the past and present further reinforced a belief in the legitimacy of intervening to stop the violence. Observers much less frequently connected contemporary circumstance to popular memories of Britain's *entry* into the Second World War, or an interpretation of Britain's legitimate resistance to German territorial *expansion*. For most moral lessons about intervening against an aggressive, irredentist regime did not retain much

explanatory power over the present and, as a result, this guide to action which had helped assure the legitimacy of the Falklands and Gulf wars was largely absent within responses written in 1999. The importance of the period immediately preceding Britain's declaration of war in 1939 as a specific object of popular memory[520] is attested when considering the manner in which observers understood contemporary conflict when it was not widely invoked. It is not a coincidence that a much more critical attitude to using military force in Kosovo occurred without direct comparison to Britain's response to German expansion and its *entry* into World War Two.

Yet observers were engaged in a reconstruction of specific narratives of British identity. The focus on ethnic cleansing and genocide engendered a re-invocation of the Holocaust which was, as Levy and Sznaider have argued in a broader, transnational cultural context, revealed as a 'touchstone' for evil.[521] Thus observers did not necessarily have to fully support Allied Force, or suggest that it was similar in nature to British entry into World War Two, in order to recreate a broader narrative of British identity which was based, fundamentally, on the morality of resisting the horror and brutality of Nazism.[522] As observers sought to make sense of the violence occurring in the Balkans they engaged in not only a construction of British identity through a process of othering of Balkan peoples and violence, but also in a reconstruction of a broader narrative of ethnic and genocidal violence outside of which Britain could be identified, even if they thought it did not demand a military response in the present. Memories of the Holocaust, Nazi brutality and the evil of Adolf Hitler were all crucial aspects which observers drew on not only to help explain the present, but to create a much broader, temporal sense of national self, viewed by observers through a specifically moral lens. As I suggest within

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[520] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 217.
[521] A consistent feature of its commemoration in the later twentieth century. See: Finney, "Introduction"; Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust*, 18.
[522] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 22.

the latter chapters of this research, a secure and moral narrative of British identity could be reinforced as part of an articulation of contrast between past and present, or by way of explaining contemporary events without endorsing the policies of the British state.

The Military, Bombing and Peacekeeping

British forces entered Kosovo as part of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) and did not face heavy combat (having been deployed after the withdrawal of FRY military forces). Observers did not often write about this phase of deployment or about any possible spill over into a larger conflict. They had been concerned instead with Allied Force and Britain's contribution to the air campaign as the primary instrument through which the Milosevic regime had been compelled to concede.[523]

Yet some observers were concerned that the war in Kosovo may lead to a larger conflict, though such anxieties were confined largely to the Balkan region and did not involve any expectation of escalation involving the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. One observer considered the prospects of a spill over into neighbouring countries:

> I'm very worried about how it will end. If it will end. It would be so easy for the conflict to spread outwards and involve other countries. Albania and Macedonia are already being destabilised and it wouldn't take much for others to be drawn in too. I wish I had a solution but I don't, but I know war never really solves anything and the whole thing fills me with distaste.[524]

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[523] There remains some debate over whether air power alone forced Milosevic to surrender, or the possibility of a ground invasion was pre-eminent. See, for example: Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, "Kosovo and the Great Air Power Debate", *International Security*. 24, no. 4 (2000): 5-38; Daryl G. Press, "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War", *International Security*. 26, no. 2 (2001): 5-44; Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower", *International Security*. 34, no. 1 (2009): 83-112.
[524] MO A2801, female, born 1965.

Another observer offered a similar account. After writing that "I remember feeling scared at first that it would escalate into a wider conflict – there was talk of WW3 of course" she went on to write:

> Having said that, it seems there is no alternative. Milosevic is carrying out the most hideous atrocities within Kosovo and has to be stopped. There are parallels with Nazi Germany, although it is a simplistic to draw comparisons, and the evil has to be countered.[525]

Unlike the previous conflict against Iraq in 1990/1991, observers did not conceive of a conflict of extraordinary scale or heightened risk for the region or the world. Though they were naturally concerned about the possibility of destruction and violence, they were more concerned about establishing the conflict's legitimacy rather than whether it may spiral out of control. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the conclusion of the Gulf War had, at least partially, expunged fears of global cataclysm resulting from the use of military force for the observers writing about it. The response quoted immediately above is representative of, I suggest, observers' focus on the legitimacy of the intervention in Kosovo which, in turn, determined which popular memories of the past were thought to be relevant. The circumstances of military conflict in the post-Cold War era sustained a broader fixation on the Second World War as a focal point for constructions of British identity.[526]

Most observers focused specifically on the NATO bombing campaign. Those who wrote about it mostly believed the use of aerial bombardment to be needlessly destructive, prone to destroy lives and livelihoods, and indiscriminate enough to undermine the 'humanitarian' objective of the campaign itself:

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[525] MO B2728, female, born 1955.
[526] Stone, *Goodbye To All That?*, 265-289.

I find it distressing to be sitting in the sun and leading a civilised life while British bombs are raining down on innocent people. Civilians must be killed in such raids and more innocent than guilty people hurt. The bombing was started, so we are told to stop just this situation coming about.[527]

We can't sit back and let all this happen, but the NATO air raids don't seem to have achieved a great deal. The campaign of ethnic cleansing was intensified, and recent mistaken bombings of civilian targets and the Chinese Embassy have handed propaganda victories to President Milosevic and have caused tension worldwide. I'm disillusioned with the progress of the bombing, at the loss of life which continues among innocent Serbs as well as the Albanians in Kosovo, and at the lack of any realistic alternative to what's happening now. I don't have any answers but I wish someone did.[528]

What good have these tactics had? The exodus of thousands of people, Albanians, fleeing to other countries, putting a strain on these countries, all of the buildings flattened and now the Serbs are leaving.[529]

Bombing seemed for most who wrote about it, to be a blunt instrument that unjustifiably affected the lives of civilians living in the FRY, and in fact contributed to escalating violence rather than curtailing it. Like those who were critical of coalition bombing in Iraq and Kuwait, another observer felt compelled to undermine any sense that the modern weapons used by British and NATO forces meant that aerial bombardment would be more humane or precise:

So, the bombs have fallen, damage has been done, troops have been killed and civilians have been killed. Why do reporters speak of civilian casualties as if with surprise? How can one bomb areas which contain or are near to civilian residents or passers-by without hurting anyone? That's not to

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[527] MO B2605, female, born 1931.
[528] MO A2801, female, born 1965.
[529] MO C1939, female, born 1939.

mention the off target bombs, of which there will be some no matter all the sophisticated

gadgetry.[530]

Observers did not write about the heroic efforts of air force pilots or the sorties

undertaken by the RAF. They wrote about bombing in broad terms, without linking it to

the individual members of the armed forces who were carrying it out. This is in stark

contrast to observers' discussions of frontline soldiers in which individual soldiers

became the focus of observers' respect and, increasingly from the early 2000s, sympathy.

The ethical dilemmas associated with bombing meant the tactic was not a source of pride,

and did not reflect well on Britain or its armed forces, unlike the heroism associated with

fighter combat, dogfighting or 'daring' raids.[531] It was thought to be needlessly

destructive and impersonal; the high technology of Britain's air forces was not understood

as a point of pride during Allied Force.[532]

In addition to ethical concerns some observers worried that bombing would also

be militarily or politically ineffective. Frequently they suggested that bombardment

would force Serbians to close ranks and galvanise support for Milosevic:

Since the bombing attacks began – and predictably – the Serbians have been drawn together as never

before; there is now no longer any opposition to the policies of Milosevic, and ethnic cleansing has

increased. One opponent of Milosevic was quoted last week as saying that the bombing has

completely destroyed the existing opposition movement.[533]

The Serbs we know have rallied behind Milosevic and why? Because they are very angry, quite

rightly, at NATO destroying their livelihood, for what purpose, after four weeks it has achieved

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[530] MO W1893, male, born 1924.
[531] Francis, *The Flyer*.
[532] For a more detailed discussion of the links between air power and narratives of technological ascendancy or progress, see: Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane*, 171.
[533] MO H2639, female, born 1940.

nothing concrete so far, all it has done is destroy concrete, and kill a number of Serb and Albanian civilians. Yes if we flattened Belgrade and destroyed all their power stations and field supplies we might achieve our objective but by then all Albanians will have been expelled from Kosovo and there'll be very little left of their property and businesses to return to... What I don't think he [Milosevic] bargained for was NATO bombing Serbia, mainly Belgrade. He must have thought the West knows it didn't bring Britain in 1940, Germany in 1944, nor Iraq in 1992 (sic), to their knees, and it certainly didn't mean the end of Churchill, Hitler or Saddam Hussein.[534]

Bombing was once again considered to be an unethical and ineffective tactic. For this latter observer, the campaign against Milosevic's regime formed part of a broader historical narrative in which Britain had both suffered and taken part in bombing campaigns, all with the same result; the reinforcement of popular resistance and opposition. Such ideas are a prominent feature of British popular memory of the Blitz.[535] Indeed, in other responses, invocation of the past was again crucial in framing what observers imagined bombing in Kosovo and Serbia to be like, and what its likely outcome would be:

The Second World War blitz and the bombing of Dresden only served to unite the people and make them more determined to resist the enemy. All the bombing and napalming of Vietnam did nothing to bring the war to an end; neither did the attacks on Baghdad during the Gulf war achieve what was hoped. It should have been obvious to NATO that strategic bombing was going to unite the Serbs, not divide them, so that even Serbs who six months ago were protesting on the streets against Slobodan Milosevic supported him once their country was under attack.[536]

I had not realised the plight of the Albanians in Kosovo until I read that NATO was to commence bombing Serbia. I have never believed that bombing solved anything. During World War II we

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[534] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[535] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 119-140.
[536] MO W1813, female, born 1950.

stood by our leaders, however we felt about them; not against them when Hitler bombed us. I am sure that Serbians who were not too keen on their leader did stand firm behind him once they were up against another enemy. However, I do believe that NATO could not ignore the plight of the Kosovo Albanians and had to take some action when talking failed.[537]

Observers remained critical of bombing across the period from 1982 to 2014, yet it is important to note here that observers generally did not have first-hand experience of bombing (increasingly so as those who were alive during the Blitz in Britain dwindled in number), and certainly did not have experience of the bombing that took place in the previous Gulf War or the Kosovo intervention. They were engaged in imagining what it was like and they did this both through what they read and saw in media reports, but also in large part by invoking specifically *popular* memories of aerial bombardment. Personal experience of bombing or its after effects was not referred to. Instead observers engaged in discussing bombing as a national experience, one in which ideas of unity and resilience were crucial, and were often able to reconstruct a narrative of British identity that existed apart from its contemporary experience in conflict, contrasting the present policy of the British state. Observers were often deeply uncomfortable with what they saw as NATO forces assuming a role once filled by the Luftwaffe or even bomber command.[538]

None of this is to suggest that observers were anti-war or objected to the use of force *per se* in Kosovo. In fact, observers frequently suggested that the ineffectiveness of an air campaign alone would at some point, inevitably lead to a ground invasion. One observer wrote during Allied Force that, "Much informed opinion has been aired on this catastrophe and it seems now that the air offensive will not be enough and that ground

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[537] MO G1241, female, born 1933.
[538] As I suggest in the introduction to this research, the strategic bombing of Germany undertaken during the Second World War has historically been one of the most uncomfortable aspects of British popular memory of the war. See, for example: Houghton, "Writing the Missing Chapter"; Overy, *The Bombing War.*

troops will have to go in."[539] Another suggested that an intervention in Kosovo could only be justified if it was prosecuted fully by a ground force:

> I have very mixed feelings about the whole thing. Obviously something had to be done to stop the ethnic cleansing and I believe NATO should have stepped in earlier to prevent the slaughter of so many people but such intensive bombing seems to be killing too many innocent civilians, including those we are trying to help and it seems to me that a ground force is the only real answer in preventing more atrocities and keeping any sort of peace.[540]

Other observers wrote similarly that "ground troops must be used",[541] that "action of some sort on land is obviously required"[542] and that "they [NATO forces] might have progressed further if they had sent in ground troops as well."[543] These observers were not squeamish about deploying soldiers to Kosovo, and they considered at length the legitimacy of the various options available to Britain and its allies. Indeed, such responses suggest that observers were concerned primarily about the legitimacy of the mission, rather than how many British lives might be lost. They offer support for more recent public opinion and polling analyses that have suggested that the goals and outcomes of intervention figure what level of casualties are considered acceptable.[544] How observers may have reacted to an actual deployment of British ground forces against the FRY's military in 1999 is of course, not possible to know.

Further, it is clear that observers' responses reveal deeper assumptions about preferences for ground combat as a more legitimate mode of waging war. Indeed, as in all cases I consider, observers were largely supportive of the British army. Among the few

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[539] MO W1476, male, born 1919.
[540] MO W1923, female, born 1938.
[541] MO B1989, male, born 1927.
[542] MO W2117, male, born 1924.
[543] MO W571, female, born 1937.
[544] See, for example: Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public"; Dixon, "Britain's 'Vietnam Syndrome'?"; Eichenberg, "Gender Difference"; Eichenberg, "Victory Has Many Friends".

responses in which they were discussed, the later deployment of British ground troops as part of the Kosovo Force revealed embedded ideas of humanity and professionalism, and the legitimacy of military service as a vocation. One observer described the good work being done by soldiers serving in Kosovo:

> The troops on the ground have done a wonderful job right from when they provided many of the refugees with tents and a supply of fairly good water, which probably saved the catastrophe of epidemics.[545]

Observers did not repeat the ideas of triumph or military victory that underscored many responses to the Falklands directive. Deployed after FRY forces withdrew, observers praised the peacekeeping and humanitarian work undertaken by soldiers on the frontline:

> I think it is good that Britain is taking on a heightened world role. The involvement in Kosovo and East Timor, albeit on a far smaller scale, can only be good for the forces. Our army is increasingly geared towards this type of work, gone are the days of massed tank regiments, ready to fight out the cold war on the flat central European plains. The professionalism of the forces in these conflicts is impressive and can only serve to heighten British credibility in the post-cold war world.[546]

For another, the ability of Britain's soldiers was contrasted putatively with Russian and American forces:

> General Jackson in Kosovo seems a very able man. It must be very difficult commanding so mixed a bunch of soldiers from NATO countries, especially having to deal with Russian soldiers whose leaders, to put it mildly, suffer hurt feelings, and obey politicians forever restricting his movements.

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[545] MO C2570, female, born 1921.
[546] MO G2867, male, born 1978.

Frankly I don't think the Americans could deal with all that. They seem either gung-ho or looking over their shoulders to home opinion.[547]

The respect and reverence for British soldiers is a well-attested, underlying aspect of observers' responses throughout the period from 1982 to 2014. In 1999, some observers again felt able to describe British forces as a positive embodiment of Britain's role in the crisis, helping to restore stability in the region, and comparing favourably to the armed forces of other nations. Reference to 'gung-ho' American personnel spoke to broader dynamic in which a sense of British competence and moderation was inculcated by contrast to the perceived belligerence of allied soldiers.

Yet it is clear that Allied Force was largely conceived of as an ethically ambiguous air campaign, without the use of frontline ground forces. Discussion of British soldiers emerged in a number of observers' responses, but they did not discuss combat or military heroism in the absence of widespread ground combat. The professionalism and humanity showed by Britain's soldiers embodied its identity after the conflict as a competent and compassionate peacekeeping force, but was also distinguished by the much more personal tone adopted by observers when compared to earlier, and more frequent discussions of the air campaign. They were more willing to attribute the successes of British peacekeeping and occupation to Britain's service personnel than they were to suggest that the destruction of the bombing campaign had been the result of the Royal Air Force's pilots.

Observers were evidently concerned specifically by the tactics adopted in Allied Force, and were more sceptical about bombing when compared to ground combat. Yet the fact remains that NATO's bombing campaign did compel the Milosevic regime to

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[547] MO H1705, female, born 1951.

withdraw from Kosovo and thus achieved its primary objective.[548] Why then was it so unpopular for observers? Why did observers seemingly prefer to deploy ground forces when this would almost certainly have cost more British lives? Some perhaps believed that a ground war might spare more civilians and thus conform in principle to the humanitarian objective of the operation. Yet it is not clear that this would have been the case and in fact, few observers argued this point in writing. Instead, as with most aspects of the conflict, observers imagined the combat and its consequences by invoking popular memories of the past that provided an explanatory power over the present, despite differences in circumstance and context. Certainly, the sort of precision bombing undertaken in 1999 – though destructive – was unlike the massive and indiscriminate targeting of civilian population centres that took place in the 1940s, yet what observers wrote about the likely outcomes or desirability of Allied Force was informed by a reconstruction of bombing in World War Two and, in particular, a specific narrative of British suffering and resilience during the Blitz. Observers were uncomfortable with Allied Force not only because it seemed to affect ordinary civilians in the FRY and Kosovo, but also because it seemed to be a deviation from what they considered to be Britain's celebrated experience during World War Two as a nation that, in Mark Connelly's words, "stood alone and took it on the chin."[549] It was uncomfortable for observers who subscribed to, and were willing to reconstruct, Britain's Blitz 'myth' to see the Royal Air Force engaged in a bombing campaign, further attesting to the uncomfortable and problematic place of strategic bombing within popular memory of Britain's Second World War. Observers rarely identified Britain as a nation which

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[548] Though of course, debate remains as to the extent of civilian casualties caused by NATO bombing and whether the possibility of ground invasion was the primary motivation for Milosevic's capitulation, rather than the bombing campaign alone. For an argument stressing the importance of air power, see: Andrew L. Stigler, "A Clear Victory for Air Power", *International Security*. 27, no. 3 (2002): 124-157.
[549] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 14.

engaged in bombing, despite the fact that Britain's campaign of strategic bombing in the 1940s far exceeded the destruction wrought by the Luftwaffe during the Blitz.[550]

Thus, the events that took place as part of Allied Force also represented an opportunity to refer to a more comfortable and morally assured version of British involvement in war and contribute to a "common sense of the past"[551] that existed apart from current events and was reconstructed on the basis of a putative contrast with the present. Driven by contemporary circumstance, observers were able to re-invoke a narrative of determined and stoic resistance during the Blitz that prefigured involvement in the Kosovo War, and made it possible to represent contemporary circumstance as a deviation from, rather than a result of, Britain's historical identity and its legitimate involvement in past wars. Interpretations of the present conflict prompted many observers to engage in a comprehensive discussion of Britain's identity that was not limited to the contemporary campaign, but involved the refashioning of a more broader history.

Leaders, Leadership and Tony Blair

Leadership was an important aspect of what observers wrote about Britain's part in Allied Force. Most frequently this centred on the figure of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. During the initial intervention against the FRY, similarly to responses written during the 1982 Falklands War, some observers described a crisis that was at least partially attributable to British or NATO failures:

> Surely it was not beyond the intelligence of the NATO high command that, given Mr Milosevic's
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> track record, the reactions we have seen i.e. more action against the Albanian Kosovans leading to

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[550] Overy, *The Bombing War*.
[551] Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 6.

the massive refugee crisis, should have been expected. We have now got two major problems 1) what to do about the refugees and 2) how to continue with the offensive against Serbia… While not professing to have any answers I think that Western politicians got themselves into a corner with their constant threats and deadlines and extension of deadlines so that eventually some armed intervention was inevitable.[552]

Another suggested that Britain's leaders were naïve to react to the crisis with such haste:

I don't think any of the politicians really though this through before they started the bombing. Haven't they learnt anything from the past history of Europe in the twentieth century?[553]

Some observers believed that failure on the part of the British government to identify and correctly diagnose the situation had made it more difficult to pursue other options. Yet this was not a salient feature of most responses. Most observers writing in 1999 did not go into detail about whether Britain's intervention was the result of a signal failure. Indeed, Britain could not be thought of as having invited aggression as some had suggested in 1982.

In fact, of the observers who discussed contemporary political leadership, most were focused solely on the office of the Prime Minister. While they were evidently aware of the New Labour government's commitment to ethical and humanitarian foreign policy, of which intervention in Kosovo was a test,[554] there was no single interpretation or assessment of Tony Blair's role in the conflict. Some were deeply critical of what they saw as Blair's haughty and strident manoeuvring, while others were more sympathetic praising his navigation of a difficult situation and his willingness to confront the abuses occurring in Kosovo. For one observer the Prime Minister embodied a new, ethical

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[552] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[553] MO H1820, female, born 1955.
[554] Daddow, "'Tony's War'?".

approach to foreign policy, and represented the most positive aspects of a British humanitarian military intervention:

> I think Blair has done a wonderful job, and had a great influence on the conflict. I feel we are again a nation to be looked up to, for all we have done and our taking of many hundreds of refugees into our keeping. May this stupid, senseless war soon come to an end.[555]

Some observers also refracted a sense of intractability or difficulty through their praise for the Blair's leadership. He appeared to represent the awkward position in which Britain found itself over the Kosovo crisis, but remained composed and principled under pressure:

> As to the practicalities of the situations, I have to say that I am grateful not to have to take the decisions as our prime minister has had to do. I suspect, given the background – or continuing threats to act militarily if no agreement was reached – he had no option but to do as he has done.[556]

For another, the use of military force against the FRY represented a mistake within an otherwise positive record in government:

> I greatly admired Tony Blair over his efforts with Northern Ireland and really felt for him when it all fell to pieces. I deeply disagreed with him over Kosovo, but had to admire the way he stood up for what he thought was the right thing to do against a number of other NATO leaders. I did not like the way he 'bestrode the world like a Colossus' both during the war and recently in Pristina, but perhaps it was only human![557]

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[555] MO B736, female, born 1918.
[556] MO W1893, male, born 1924.
[557] MO W2267, female, born 1926.

These observers were commenting not only on what they thought of Tony Blair, but how his actions and behaviours related to Britain's policies towards Kosovo, and its identity within the conflict. The close association between Tony Blair's government and humanitarian ideals was not questioned here, even if its outcomes were not fully supported. Blair was represented sometimes as naïve or self-aggrandising but mostly as a principled and determined figure. While it was hard to establish whether the intervention had been right or wrong, there was no suggestion that there existed any ulterior motives. Britain, under the leadership of the Blair government, had become involved in a conflict out of a genuine humanitarian impulse, though many remained uncertain about whether the use of force was actually justified.

Other observers were more critical. One questioned Blair's handling of an apparently difficult conundrum:

Clinton does not want the American public watching pictures of body bags or smouldering American aircraft on their television news. Nor, I'm quite sure does Tony Blair who would be blamed for our part in this mess. How did the generals convince Clinton and Blair and other west European leaders that this time bombing cities would have the desired effect? Perhaps they didn't, perhaps Clinton and Blair think we have to teach Milosevic a lesson, he can't be allowed to get way with what he hand his army and police are doing? But what is the lesson? Why did they believe that this time it would cause a tyrant to give up? I was baffled from day one of the bombing and I am more baffled today.[558]

Evidently, the nature of the conflict in Kosovo impacted observers' accounts of Prime Ministerial leadership. In this response the use of air power as a primary mode of military action was considered to be the product of Blair's weakness and desire to avoid 'blame' for deeper involvement in the war.

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[558] MO A883, male, born 1933.

Other observers placed blame for an illegitimate military intervention squarely at the feet of the Prime Minister. Blair's desire for public recognition as a 'war leader' and his heavy handed method of operation in regard to government and parliament suggested that intervention in Kosovo was not predicated on principle alone:

I don't feel impressed by the sight of President Clinton and Tony Blair posing as great war leaders… I think the war was instigated by President Clinton, backed by 'bomber' Blair for their own glorification, and I am sad that our Tory party feel they must support it.[559]

In the UK, all of this has been carried on without the sanction of parliament. A debate was held, but when those MPs opposed to the bombing campaign tried to force a vote, subterfuge was used to deny that opportunity. So much for democracy. In the last few days it has become clearer and clearer that those expressing opposition are to be subjected to extreme vilification – the government must not be criticised.[560]

There was evidently, a party political undercurrent to what observers wrote about political leaders. Like responses written about the previous Falklands War, those who were not politically aligned with the current Prime Minister were often less willing to credit them with success, and more willing to emphasise flaws in leadership ability or personal character. Yet, what observers wrote here was again important in reflecting what they thought about Britain more broadly. Most observers who wrote about intervention in Kosovo either objected to it, or were unsure about its justification or legitimacy. In describing Britain's contribution to Allied Force as the result of a failure of leadership by the Blair government, or as a product of his character, observers were able both to signal their disapproval of the contemporary use of force without suggesting that the

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[559] MO B2605, female, born 1931.
[560] MO H2639, female, born 1940.

intervention represented a fundamental challenge to Britain's broader identity as a force for good.

It is important to note however that fewer observers were as concerned with writing about Blair's leadership during the Kosovo War as the previous cohort writing about the Falklands had been with the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, or subsequent cohorts would be when writing about Blair's role in the Iraq War. This was, I suggest, a reflection of the more ambiguous and reserved nature of observers' responses. Fewer observers were sure about the legitimacy of intervening military as part of Allied Force by comparison. Thus fewer observers were willing to blame or credit the Blair government either way. Perceptions of legitimacy certainly impacted on what observers wrote about other aspects of British involvement in the conflict, including contemporary leaders and leadership.

Yet, what observers did write about the Prime Minister in 1999 affected, and was affected by, how observers conceived of Britain's identity in the conflict. For some Blair was characterised as an honest and principled leader, whose intervention in Kosovo was well-meaning, if misguided. This narrative reflects an important aspect of observers' wider beliefs about Britain's part in the conflict, namely that they thought it to be a principled act but not necessarily one that was appropriate or justified. Likewise, those who were more critical of British involvement were able to suggest that it resulted from governmental failure, contributing to, I argue, a broader representation in which contemporary circumstance was incongruent with a more secure and celebrated narrative of British identity, rooted in legitimate defence against aggression. For those few observers who were willing to blame the Kosovo intervention on Blair's incompetence or desire for 'glorification', the current war could more easily be constructed as a sort of deviation from an underlying or historically evident national character. This is a feature of

observers' responses that can be seen among those written in 1999 but which becomes a distinctive feature of those concerning later conflicts, particularly the Iraq War.

The UN, USA and the Kosovo Liberation Army

Observers were also concerned about the implications that military intervention against the FRY might have on the status of the United Nations as a forum for the peaceful resolution of dispute. For one, an unwarranted intervention in another state's affairs was considered at odds with the principles of the UN:

> Such action [against the FRY] is against international law and is without the authority of the Security Council. However Tony Blair and Bill Clinton wish to show the World that they are great war leaders.[561]

Other observers were more concerned by the apparent ineffectiveness of the UN revealed by the outbreak of another war. They wrote variously that "I strongly believe that the United Nations should have taken a firm line with Milosevic long ago"[562] and that "It is a great pity that the UN could not have been active in seeking a solution at a much earlier stage."[563] For another, the rigidity of states' rights to sovereignty was the primary obstacle:

> So far as international law is concerned, NATO's actions are probably illegal as Yugoslavia is a sovereign state and according to the UN charter, is entitled to do what it likes within its own territory. I believe that when this bloody engagement has ended, a strong case could be made for an amendment to the UN charter which would permit action to be taken against sovereign states if it

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[561] MO B1442, male, born 1923.
[562] MO B1533, female, born 1926.
[563] MO W2117, male, born 1924.

could be clearly demonstrated that the government of those states was acting atrociously towards a significant section of their own population.[564]

Observers were concerned with how the Kosovo intervention might affect the United Nations and the possibility of multilateral security. As in both the Falklands and Gulf wars, observers frequently seemed disappointed that – regardless of what they thought about the legitimacy of the conflict – the United Nations had not been able to avert the use of military force or provide a diplomatic solution.

However, it is important to note here that no observers rejected the legitimacy of Allied Force solely because it did not have the full backing of the UN or international law. Instead, they made sense of the legitimacy of the conflict *before* going on to discuss the inadequacies of international organisations. As with observers' discussions of NATO, what they wrote about international institutions, and British membership of them, was informed by what thought about the circumstances of the current conflict and not the other way around. Such discussions revealed once again that observers were often keen to stress that Britain ought to be involved in multilateralism and international institutions, but that perceptions of identity – heavily rooted in interpretations of Britain's past – more readily figured what they wrote about contemporary crises and conflicts.

Allied Force was prosecuted by a NATO coalition yet, as in the previous Gulf War, most of the firepower was supplied by the United States.[565] Many observers reflected on Britain's position relative to its primary ally and, as in previous responses, most were critical of the apparent submission of British agency to American power and persuasion:

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[564] MO B1989, male, born 1927.

[565] Brian White, "British Foreign Policy: Continuity and Transformation", in *Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Ryan K. Beasley, Juliet Kaarbo, Jeffrey S. Lantis, and Michael T. Snarr (London: SAGE, 2013); McCourt, "Rethinking Britain's Role"; McCourt, "Embracing Humanitarian Intervention".

Why do people think America is the boss and when they say 'jump' every nation jumps. America should not be the global policeman. We need an international police force of all nations to monitor human rights violations.[566]

It seems NATO is led by America (when it suits them) and I feel they are far too hasty; bomb first, think about the consequences after. I was under the impression that the forming of NATO was to ensure there would not be any more war in Europe… what I don't like most of all is the power America has over us.[567]

I believe we only entered this war because the British government was too insecure to say no to the USA when they wanted to get involved. American governments have always believed that you can bully people into surrender, although history proves otherwise.[568]

For some then, the Kosovo intervention, and the assembly of a NATO coalition, gave another opportunity for observers to express dissatisfaction with Britain's relative junior status – a feature of previous responses to the Gulf Crisis directives, and an increasingly important part of subsequent responses concerning Afghanistan and Iraq – and to portray an American Other that was more belligerent, rash and warlike than Britain. A persistent feature of responses to all the post-Falklands directives; the preponderance of American power led observers to create a sense of British identity based on caution, tolerance and moderation that contrasted the overbearing belligerence which was attributed to the United States.

Others were also concerned with identifying groups within the FRY on whose behalf Britain was deploying military force, namely the Kosovo Liberation Army

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[566] MO B2810, female, born 1967.
[567] MO C1939, female, born 1939.
[568] MO W1813, female, born 1950.

(KLA).[569] Interestingly, some drew heavily on memories of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and made comparisons between the KLA and the Irish Republican Army, embedding a suspicious attitude toward the possibility that Britain may be lending support to a 'terrorist group':

> Support for the KLA may have been misguided. This is an organisation which had it been operating in any Western country would have been called a terrorist group. How would we feel if the Americans, French and Italians started bombing British bases in N.Ireland in support of the IRA? I do not suggest that the two situations are directly comparable but we have been seen to support a terrorist organisation against the government of that country.[570]

> Now that Yugoslavia has been bombed for not allowing Kosovo terrorists to break up the country it will be interesting to see if Spain is bombed for not granting ETA part of Spain, or Sri-Lanka for not giving in to the Tamil Tigers, or Algeria for not giving in to Muslim terrorists. At least the UK is safe having surrendered to the IRA, although we haven't yet handed over Northern Ireland to the Irish republic. No doubt that will happen eventually.[571]

> It was an internal affair; Kosovo wanted independence from Bosnia (sic) and had a terrorist army to bring that about. All over the world there have been similar conflicts, but we haven't got involved. America has, without success. If only Tony Blair would get similarly tough with the IRA.[572]

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[569] For discussion of the origins and history of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and its strategy and tactics within the context of the Balkan wars, see: Tim Judah, "The Growing Pains of the Kosovo Liberation Army", in *Kosovo: The Politics of Delusion*, edited by Michael Waller, Kyril Drezov and Bulent Gokay (London: Routledge, 2001); James Pettifer, "The Kosovo Liberation Army: The Myth of Origin", in *Kosovo: The Politics of Delusion*, edited by Michael Waller, Kyril Drezov and Bulent Gokay (London: Routledge, 2001); Alpaslan Ozerdem, "From a 'Terrorist' Group to a 'Civil Defence' Corps", *International Peacekeeping*. 10, no. 3 (2003): 79-101; Klejda Mulaj, "Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of the Kosovo Liberation Army", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 31, no. 12 (2008): 1103-1119; Tomislav Dulic and Roland Kostic, "Yugoslavs in Arms: Guerrilla Tradition, Total Defence and the Ethnic Security Dilemma", *Europe-Asia Studies*. 62, no. 7 (2010): 1051-1072; Kubo, "Why Kosovar Albanians".
[570] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[571] MO B1442, male, born 1923.
[572] MO B2605, female, born 1931.

For some observers, connection between the IRA and the KLA complicated any sense of moral clarity in intervening in Kosovo. As described above, very few believed that military force was justified purely on humanitarian grounds. Concerns over the nature of the Kosovo Liberation Army suggest further that observers generally conceived of a more complicated complex situation and were worried about the consequences of using military force. The need to protect Kosovar Albanians was challenged by some observers when they focused on the perceived illegitimacy of the groups representing them.

Observers conceived of a conflict in Kosovo that involved a range of actors to which they ascribed certain ideas of identity. While what they wrote was related to the specific context of the Kosovo War and perceptions of its legitimacy, this process of othering also helped observers to position Britain in the conflict and construct a sense of identity by contrast. In addition to allied nations, primarily the United States, observers were particularly concerned with identifying those who Allied Force was aimed at supporting. Critical descriptions of the KLA as a 'terrorist group' not only compounded a sense that the politics of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, and thus the politics of the contemporary violence, were not clear cut, but also distanced Britain from terrorism, the targeting of civilians and separatism. What observers thought about the United Nations, the KLA or the United States was not figured solely by descriptions of its activities or an evaluation of its aims or structures.

As in all conflicts I consider, the possibility of war pertained to a specific dynamic in which other participants and belligerents were described, and in which observers dwelled on the differences between them. The Kosovo intervention was an unusually limited deployment for the British military across this period, being much shorter and less costly in terms of casualties than other operations, yet it once again prompted a focus on Britain's identity relative to those other groups that were caught in its violence. The result

was the reproduction of narrative of identity based on ideas of civilisation, caution, tolerance and moderation, and a more holistic and comprehensive construction of British identity.

The Enemy: Slobodan Milosevic's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

In keeping with responses submitted to previous directives in 1982 and 1990, observers were collectively more concerned with identifying Britain's opponent during the Kosovo War than its allies. Frequently the enemy was condensed largely to the figure of one man, Slobodan Milosevic, who came to embody the absolute immorality and illegitimacy of the FRY regime, and the inhumanity of its policies in Kosovo. Typical responses asked "How can one man be the cause of so much suffering inflicted on the Kosovo Albanians?"[573] and whether "President Milosevic and those who have followed his orders ever be brought to justice?"[574] For another, Milosevic's manipulation of Serbian nationalism was a salient aspect of their wider perspective on the legitimacy of a military intervention

> They [those who did not support military intervention] seem to think that President Milosevic would have seen reason sooner or later and he could have been persuaded in a nice civilised meeting to lay off the Albanian Kosovans, when it is glaringly obvious that someone like that is not going to see reason and come to a cosy agreement, and besides, the Serbs had already walked out of the talks. As far as he is concerned, it is not about being fair and reasonable to the Albanians, but about the assertion of Serb strength and power and his own popularity with his people as the great leader of the Serb nation. Now that he has lost the war, of course, his image has collapsed, and he is not popular, but before that he was able to use Serb resentment of and prejudice against Albanian

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[573] MO W2529, male, born 1925.
[574] MO A2848, male, born 1958.

Kosovans to gather support around himself as the national leader, as there is nothing like having an enemy for reinforcing a sense of collective identity.[575]

Again, in a similar fashion to some who had stressed the low cunning of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf crisis, observers who were more cautious or critical about intervening against the FRY regime stressed the difficulty of facing an enemy like Milosevic:

Milosevic may not be an educated man but he is no fool, he excels at playing one person off against another and at breaking promises. He thought and I think the west had said they wouldn't invade Kosovo with ground troops, because we would suffer so many causalities and would be very unlikely to defeat the Serb army which would fire down upon us from the wooded hills.[576]

Observers were never supportive or sympathetic. Milosevic's regime was universally considered to be illegitimate, dictatorial and brutal by observers. However, some counselled caution or suggested that *despite* the abhorrent character of Milosevic's government, intervention could not be justified. Britain was right to oppose Milosevic's policies yet this did not necessarily form part of a clear overarching narrative on the legitimacy of British military action.

Further however, observers were engaged in identifying the Milosevic regime by constructing comparisons with Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, the latter – as in previous responses concerning Saddam Hussein in particular - revealed as a benchmark for brutality, tyranny, aggression and evil:

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[575] MO A2212, female, born 1956.
[576] MO A883, male, born 1933.

Watching the news today made my blood run cold and I felt that something really terrible is happening to the people of this region. It seems they have a madman, comparable to Hitler, in charge of their fate, and NATO are trying to bomb him into submission.[577]

Allusions to Hitler created a sense of persistent British resistance to dictatorship, and imbued Milosevic's regime with an unambiguously immoral quality by association. Britain's 'good war' in World War Two was again reconstructed as observers focused in on the 'evil' embodied by Hitler:

What I find puzzling is that the Yugoslavian people are so incensed that we, their former allies, have turned against them. Milosevic must have done a very good propaganda job on them if that is what they believe. When were allies, fighting alongside each other it was to stop the evils of Nazism; to stop Hitler from butchering the Jews and anyone else who got in his way. How is that different from what Milosevic is doing today? He is ordering his forces to wipe out ethnic Albanians in the same way that Hitler murdered Jews.[578]

I have been moved to tears so many times over the last few weeks and cannot comprehend how Slobodan Milosevic can be doing the dreadful deeds that he is. Adolf Hitler died in his bunker during the 1939-45 war, but his spirit has been reborn in Slobodan Milosevic. He needs to be captured as soon as possible, along with his top military powers, tried in a war crimes court and sentenced to death.[579]

Observers referred to a well understood narrative of brutality and evil, conceptualising the nature of the Milosevic regime by association. As I have discussed previously in this chapter, often such responses focused specifically on the Holocaust as a benchmark; resistance to Milosevic could be narrated by referring to past British resistance to the

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[577] MO H1745, female, born 1951.
[578] MO E2836, female, born 1950.
[579] MO W571, female, born 1937.

policies of the Nazis and Hitler. Such comparisons gave a specifically moral quality to their representations of Milosevic and his regime. They believed that not only were his policies wrong, that they were the product of a much more fundamental immorality or evil.

Of course, contemporary conditions affected which popular memories were thought to be relevant or retain a power to explain the present. Once again, observers were confronting an opposing regime that wielded a conventional military apparatus, was not liberal or democratic, and was thought to be dominated by a powerful individual. As in both the previous Falklands and Gulf wars, observers drew on memories of Nazi dictatorship, most often reduced to the personification of its evil in Adolf Hitler, in order to clarify what they wrote about the contemporary context. Likewise, observers were drawn to reconstruct a narrative of British resistance to the oppression and brutality of the Nazis, centred in some cases on their prosecution of the Holocaust, rather than on the aggressive expansionism of Nazi Germany. Thus observers further reinforced a sense of British identity that was assured and moral by contrast, but which differed subtly in construction to that which prevailed among responses to previous directives. Their perspectives on the legitimacy of Allied Force were comparatively more ambiguous, yet the recollection of Nazism and Hitler remained absolute and unchallenged.

Conclusions

The smaller volume of total responses to the 1999 directive and its subordinate place with the MOP hierarchy demonstrates the less prominent position of the Kosovo conflict within both the minds of observers and the structure of the Mass Observation Project itself. Yet, for the observers who did respond to the directive and discussed the military

intervention against the FRY regime, it was considered an important event framed not only by the prospect of violence within Kosovo but the more immediate history of Balkan conflicts in the previous decade.

Once again allusions to print press, radio and television media suggest that observers kept up to date with developments in the war, and their often detailed accounts show that they were well informed.[580] Importantly however, it is clear that observers did not conceive of the deployment of British forces as part of Allied Force as a detached, singular event, nor did they simply consume news reporting or official analyses; they were engaged in placing the Kosovo intervention within a remembered past, recreating a sense of an established identity which remained flexible as new circumstances were negotiated.[581] Again, familiar aspects of the Second World War continued to occupy much space within responses but in addition observers invoked Britain's more immediately previous conflicts in the Falklands and Gulf wars. Even among those observers who did not invoke popular memories of past conflicts, the prospect of military action gave greater urgency to the identification of allied and hostile others, and contributed to a broader, shared belief in a common identity.

Observers identified a different contemporary circumstance in 1999 relative to previous conflicts. Within their collected responses a purely humanitarian argument existed in tension with prevailing assumptions about the legitimacy of resistance to expansion and aggression, national defence and the sovereignty of other states. The representation of a region engulfed in perennial and intractable violence was similarly at odds with, for example, a singular narrative of interrupted island life which emerged within responses written in 1982. Observers were comparatively more critical of Allied Force than those who had written about the military effort to retake the Falkland Islands.

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[580] Towle, *Going to War*, 132-141.
[581] For example, see: Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 14-22; Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 11-14; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 1-10; Noakes, *War and the British* 10-14; Noakes and Pattinson, "Introduction", 4-10.

Some were unsure, confused or held deep reservations about prosecuting force in response to the 'internal' problems of another state. The possibility of humanitarian and ethical foreign policy was praised by some observers, but most seemed unsure about its practice in Kosovo.

Contemporary circumstances were understood more clearly by observers when they invoked popular memories of Britain's past, most notably those related to the Second World War. However, though Britain's identity in the Kosovo conflict was understood as part of a broader, common history, it is clear that the comparisons observers made between the Kosovo intervention and past conflicts were neither as frequent nor as direct or prescriptive as those written in responses to previous cases. The context of humanitarian intervention within a sovereign state affected what memories of the past were relevant, and thus in turn affected how observers evaluated the legitimacy of the present conflict. When compared to the Falklands and Gulf conflicts, British entry into World War Two was used less frequently as a guide "to action" or to "provide parallels for contemporary events";[582] the legitimacy of resistance to territorial expansion could not be asserted by association. Indeed, the fact that so many observers were unsure or opposed to military intervention in Kosovo, despite perceived similarities between Milosevic and Adolf Hitler, or similarities between Balkan violence and the abject horror of the Holocaust, reveals the continuing importance memories of German expansion and British appeasement in observers' constructions of moral or political legitimacy.

In other areas, most notably concerning the actual military operation against the FRY, popular memories were invoked as part of a widespread rejection of British and NATO tactics. Britain's contribution to the bombing campaign was unpopular with observers who were highly critical of the perceived threat to civilian life – particularly

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[582] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 2.

given the apparent humanitarian justification – but also suggested that such an activity was incongruent with Britain's experience during the Blitz. Observers attested to a popular memory of that episode based on stoic resistance and determination.[583] They drew equivalence between Britain's contemporary tactics and those of the Luftwaffe in the 1940s and suggested that such a campaign was doomed to failure as it would galvanise support for the Serbian population as had, observers believed, been the case in Britain in 1940. Here – as is increasingly apparent among observers' responses to later directives – a celebrated memory of the Second World War continued to be invoked by observers but often as part of a problematic comparison in which Britain's contemporary identity seemed at odds with its legitimate and victorious resistance to Nazi Germany. Observers were less concerned with the philosophy or politics of humanitarian ideology, or the technicalities of international law, than they were with incorporating contemporary British force within a national narrative. Once again, national identity was an important subject within responses not because it was incidentally affected by involvement in military conflict, but because the possibility of war itself was understood by creating and recreating particular narratives of identity, especially when it involved no direct, personal experience.

Indeed, even as a minority of observers could claim to have personally experienced the Second World War they collectively continued to invoke and refashion specifically *popular* memories, and reconstruct a broader narrative of British *national* identity that did not depend on personal or lived experience. This process was – as in all cases - affected by the contemporary context in which observers invoked them, yet Britain's experience in the 'good war' was not challenged and, though its celebrated entry into the conflict with Germany was less frequently referred to, invocations of Nazism,

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[583] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 119-140.

Hitler, the Blitz and the Holocaust formed the basis of a reconstruction of a morally assured effort to defeat Nazi Germany. This narrative was subtly different to that focused on British resistance to territorial expansionism and invasions, but was one which remained imbued with a fundamental morality.

The broadly ambiguous context of the present could be made sense of by referring to a more secure history. Conditions in the present once more permitted observers to retreat into the past and as such they engaged not only in creating a sense of identity in the present military campaign, but also more comprehensively refashioned and reconstructed an interpretation of British history band identity. As in all cases I consider, observers' discussions of the Kosovo conflict were not confined to a discussion of political decisions or military violence, but necessarily involved a more fundamental imagination of the national community itself.

The Afghanistan War 2001-2014

The war in Afghanistan began in October 2001 and was a response to the 11 September terrorist attacks in New York. The initial offensive was overwhelmingly an American deployment, and was aimed at destroying Al Qaeda infrastructure and training camps, and removing the Taliban regime that harboured them.[584] Britain's contribution was, at this stage, limited to supporting American operations.[585] The initial bombing campaign was undertaken by the United States Air Force alone and succeeded in forcing the Taliban to withdraw (primarily into neighbouring Pakistan), after which coalition forces began the deployment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). American and British forces remained in the country, the latter confined largely to Kabul and its surrounds as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), yet by 2003 they faced a deepening insurgency from returning Taliban forces.[586] Thus NATO took control of ISAF,[587] expanding the occupation to the whole of Afghanistan, and resulting in the redeployment of a much larger British force from 2006 responsible for securing the Taliban stronghold of Helmand Province.[588] Consequently, British forces faced an intense struggle to retain control of the province's towns and villages and, though a number of personnel had been killed in the previous five years, the vast majority of the 456 British military deaths

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[584] For a discussion of the conflict in the context of rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, see: See, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 217-247.

[585] Royal Air Force, "Operation HERRICK, Afghanistan", 2018. Online, available at: https://www.raf.mod.uk/currentoperations/herrick-afghanistan.cfm (Accessed 31-01-2018).

[586] Theo Farrel and Antonio Giustozzi. "The Taliban at war: inside the Helmand insurgency, 2004-2012", *International Affairs*. 89, no. 4 (2013): 845-871

[587] The title given to US, British and allied forces occupying Afghanistan alongside the newly created Afghan National Army (ANA).

[588] An initial force of around 3000 combat troops rose steadily to a peak of 9500 by 2008. See: BBC News, "UK troops in Afghanistan: Timeline of key events", 2015. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35159951 (Accessed 31-01-2018).

sustained during Operation Herrick – the British codename for combat operations in Afghanistan – occurred between 2006 and 2014.[589]

The Afghanistan War represents a much different case to those considered in previous chapters in this research. Excluding Operation Banner in Northern Ireland, the war in Afghanistan was the most deadly fought by British forces since Korea, and was the longest since World War Two. Further, it was predicated on the removal of an internationally unrecognised regime that had supported terrorist attacks rather than one that had invaded a neighbouring state or been engaged in ethnic cleansing or genocide.[590] Again these circumstances were interpreted by observers in light of what they meant for Britain's contemporary identity as an international and military power. Yet, as I seek to show here, neither the length of the war nor its comparatively high death toll appear to have resulted in particular concern among responses. The conflict was instead articulated (somewhat counterintuitively given heavy price paid by British forces there) as a peripheral event and was largely overshadowed by a more controversial campaign in Iraq. The conflict was rarely incorporated within specific narratives of British identity, or understood by direction connection with popular memories of past conflicts or events; a departure from previous cases.

I consider responses written by fifty-five observers between 2001 and 2014 which were, unlike those considered within previous chapters, drawn from multiple directives.[591] The total number of observers considered in this chapter is greater than those previous primarily because I have attempted to gain a sufficient range of

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[589] For a breakdown of British fatalities in Operation Herrick, see: Ministry of Defence, "Operations in Afghanistan", 2016. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan (Accessed 31-01-2018). For a journalistic narrative of the British deployment to Afghanistan, see: Jack Fairweather, *The Good War: The Battle for Afghanistan 2006-2014* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014).

[590] Ethnic cleansing was however, a salient feature of the period of civil war immediately preceding the US-led intervention. Rashid, *Taliban*, 55-66.

[591] The topics and subjects which these directives covered by asking observers to record in their responses can be seen in Appendix II.

perspectives at each point in time, from each directive, and thus reach a point of 'saturation'[592] in the broad ideas and narratives that they articulated. However, these responses equal just over half those considered in the subsequent chapter on the Iraq War. This is largely because, as I explain throughout, observers voluntarily focused on the Iraq conflict at the expense of that in Afghanistan. Most of the responses considered here were taken from the first three directives issued in 2001 and 2002 which prompted observers to discuss the initial US-led intervention from October 2001. I have however included responses written after this period; those submitted to the 2008 directive in particular, which asked for observers' "War experiences and reflections". These submissions revealed the extent to which the conflict in Afghanistan had become elided with a more controversial war in Iraq.[593] It is important to note then, that while observers were concerned with the military conflict which occurred in Afghanistan, they were, by comparison, often more focused on the contemporaneous war in Iraq from March 2003, a conflict which they more frequently and directly connected to Britain's history and identity.

Yet of course, many observers did refer explicitly to the Afghanistan War, and Britain's role within it. Though they represented the initial invasion as a confusing or poorly-understood military action, the redeployment to Helmand Province in 2006 (and the subsequent ground combat and increasing military deaths) refocused observers' responses on the conflict. Its specific circumstances and its occurrence within the broader cultural and political milieu of the 'War on Terror' meant that observers found it difficult to articulate the conflict as part of a secure or familiar narrative of British history. Popular memories of Britain's Second World War, so important in clarifying what observers

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[592] Ritchie and Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice*, 77-108. For a discussion of achieving saturation in interviews of 'ordinary' people focused on Britain's involvement in recent military conflicts, see: Colley, "Is Britain a force for good?"

[593] The directive sheets from which observers' responses are drawn here – namely, those issued in 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2009 – are available in Appendix II.

wrote about previous conflicts, were conspicuous by their absence. The war in Afghanistan represented a more complex and peripheral event for Britain, and one in which familiar narratives of identity appeared to become fragmented. Observers became increasingly likely to interpret the conflict by considering how it affected Britain's domestic society, race, ethnicity and religion; a far less comfortable or secure means of articulating a narrative of national identity.

Legitimacy

As in all other cases considered in this research, observers who wrote about the Afghanistan War at all points between 2001 and 2014 were concerned with evaluating its legitimacy and whether Britain had been justified in using military force. However, it is obvious that they were not sure about what the conflict meant for Britain and found it difficult to make sense of the military intervention, particularly in its initial phase in 2001. Importantly though, observers were not overwhelmingly *opposed* to using military force against Al Qaeda or the Taliban; instead they conceived of a conflict in which it was difficult to know what was happening, why it was occurring and crucially, what Britain's role within it was. The contemporary circumstances of the War on Terror (linked heavily to religious extremism and domestic terrorism)[594] complicated observers' perspectives on the legitimacy of the conflict, the result of which was a widespread ambivalence toward the war and a sense that it remained peripheral for Britain. These findings demonstrate how the construction and mobilisation of popular memories past conflicts, and the incorporation of present circumstances within broader narratives of British identity,

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[594] For a study of the cultural reception and construction of the War on Terror, see: Paul Douglas Humphries, "The War on Terror in Postmodern Memory: Explanation, Understanding, and Myth in the Wake of 9/11", PhD Dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 2014. Online, available at: https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/712452/Humphries_georgetown_0076D_12791.pdf;sequence=1 (Accessed 02-03-2018).

worked to clarify and reinforce observers' perspectives on the legitimacy of military force in the present. Their absence contributed to a pervasive ambivalence and ambiguity within what they wrote.

Of the fifty-five observers who wrote about the Afghanistan War, twenty-four believed the British campaign was justified while twenty were undecided. Just six individuals, writing mostly in 2001 and 2002 during the initial intervention, were certain that Britain's use of military force was justified. Even within this small group the reasons for their support varied. One described how it was right to remove "a truly vile and universally detested [Taliban] regime"[595] while another believed it would afford "the country [Afghanistan] some stability."[596] A similar idea was expressed by another:

> I would love to be anti-war but not going [to war in Afghanistan] would have condemned vast numbers to more violence… I believe in intervention and do not go along with the concept of an inviolate nation state.[597]

Some observers described the initial intervention in Afghanistan using the same language of humanitarianism which many had used to describe the previous military intervention in Kosovo. Again, for a small number of individuals, the idea that military force was being deployed to liberate or protect oppressed peoples legitimised its use.

For others however, the conflict was linked intimately to the September 11th terrorist attacks and the newly declared 'War on Terror':

> If the Taliban regime was the source of, or harbouring the terrorists who engineered the atrocity of September 11th, and who were planning further such acts, then the war is totally justified. It has also

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[595] MO W3731, male, born 1961.
[596] MO F1560, female, born 1921.
[597] MO H3821, male, born 1952.

freed the people of the country from a particularly oppressive regime, although being realistic that was a "side-benefit" and I doubt a significant concern in the minds of the US and British leadership, more a convenient added justification for going to war.[598]

One observer wrote immediately before the war in 2001 that she could not "see a purely diplomatic solution."[599] Writing again after the initial intervention she described an apparently successful anti-terror campaign:

> I have written about this subject [the initial bombing campaign] when it was in full swing. It was against the Taliban and Al Quaida. I think it definitely made an impact on Islamic terrorists, not only blowing up their training camps but freezing any bank account set up for the purpose of financing terrorist activities.[600]

Even among these early responses however, a likely war in Iraq began to overshadow what observers wrote about Afghanistan. As a specific reaction to terrorism, the Afghanistan War was considered justifiable by comparison:

> We are not being threatened, Iraq hasn't declared war on America or us, it was a bit different in Afghanistan, they sent those two planes deliberately into the twin towers.[601]

It is interesting to note here the extent to which the contemporary circumstances of the War on Terror intermingled with humanitarian ideals within the responses of observers who supported British involvement in the initial action. While contemporary circumstances were clearly important in determining what they wrote, it is evident that

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[598] MO C2256, male, born 1946.
[599] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[600] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[601] MO C1939, female, born 1939.

they were interpreted differently by different individuals. As I suggested in the previous chapter, some observers had enthusiastically supported the possibility of humanitarian military intervention and 'ethical foreign policy' in relation to Kosovo. In 2001, a small number again characterised the contemporary deployment in this manner, despite the intimate and obvious connection American and British policy in Afghanistan had with terrorism and Al Qaeda.[602]

Yet very few observers supported the military intervention in Afghanistan as either a humanitarian or anti-terror operation. In fact, twenty-four of the fifty-five observers considered here described a use of military force that did not have a sufficient justification. For some observers, the illegitimacy of the Afghanistan invasion was rooted in a belief that it would cause death and destruction, worsening the situation, and thus undermining a humanitarian argument:

> The people need aid not bombing… There will always be terrorism. The best way to reduce it is for powerful countries to be considerate to their weaker neighbours. Kindness counts [and] the world hates bullies. Don't spend money on state of the art armaments when it could be used for improving the lives of those in poor undeveloped countries. Make friends not enemies. Promote care, not belligerence.[603]

Writing retrospectively in the summer of 2002, another observer described the intervention in Afghanistan as a humanitarian failure:

> It [the initial invasion] would have been a worthwhile benefit if Afghanistan had been able to formulate a stable, democratic government. So far, that has not happened. Unless the West commits

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[602] See: Rashid, *Taliban*, 215-246.
[603] MO A883, male, born 1933.

to the kind of effort towards stability and reconstruction that they promised months ago, it may never happen.[604]

As in the previous Kosovo conflict, a number of observers characterised the use of military force as self-defeating, and likely to cause more violence rather than end it. In some cases they characterised the conflict as one based, at least partially, on humanitarian grounds but felt that a military intervention was a mistake because it would result in the deaths of civilians or those oppressed by the Taliban regime.

Others were more concerned with the lack of a discernible threat emanating from Afghanistan, despite the September 11th terrorist attacks having been inspired by Al Qaeda. They criticised an intervention against a regime that had not threatened or attacked Britain specifically. One observer described Britain "trying to find an international role"[605] and an intervention in Afghanistan that "in the end will change nothing."[606] Another wrote that "I don't support Britain's involvement in Iraq or Afghanistan or anywhere else: it's not our business and we have enough problems here to attend to"[607] while a further response read; "What are we gaining from it all?"[608] Certainly, the few observers who thought the conflict to be justified were outnumbered by those who characterised it as unwarranted or lacking British interests.

Why then, given the febrile atmosphere of the period immediately following the September 11th attacks, did not more observers support a campaign directed against Al Qaeda? The idea that they did not understand or know about the Taliban or Al Qaeda is not sufficient given the extent to which they were discussed and represented within responses (something returned to shortly). Likewise, observers clearly believed the

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[604] MO H1541, male, born 1944.
[605] MO B1533, female, born 1926.
[606] MO B1533, female, born 1926.
[607] MO W1382, male, born 1924.
[608] MO D3906, male, born 1966.

September 11th attacks to have been extraordinarily important events, not only in terms of their human cost, but in terms of their impact on international politics. Very few observers were dismissive; most were naturally aggrieved by appalling loss of civilian life. Instead, I suggest that observers once again interpreted the legitimacy of using military force in Afghanistan by considering what it meant for Britain. As in responses written by previous cohorts, observers attempted to understand the conflict by evaluating whether Britain was acting in the defensive. One observer, writing in 2008, reflected a view that was prevalent in a number of accounts, suggesting that military force could only be justified in defence:

> I do believe that on the whole our troops should only really be deployed only when absolutely necessary to defend our own country and territories... I respect the job that the military do but do not support as much the political decisions which are made to send these troops out. I did not really support Tony Blair's decisions to send troops to Afghanistan but would not feel moved enough to march in an anti-war protest as I think that is disrespectful to the military.[609]

The Afghanistan War demonstrated how the legitimacy of British military force was derived from its deployment as a resort against aggression. Observers were again involved in identifying whether contemporary circumstances could be considered to be defensive in nature. Most writing from 2001 characterised the military operation to remove the Taliban and pursue Al Qaeda as one that was reactionary and lacked the sort of imminent threat of aggression that legitimised the use of military force. It was an interpretation which contrasted the sort of expansion or territorial aggression which had, for previous cohorts of observers, legitimised the use of force in the Falklands and Gulf

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[609] MO A4348, female, born 1982.

wars. Once again, most observers conceived of defence as resistance to invasion or expansion by one state against another.

As the conflict unfolded from October 2001, observers became increasingly worried about the direction of the war. Many began to suggest that it would not be short or decisive, further compounding a wider sentiment that it had not been sufficiently justified in the first place:

> I think this war was a stupid war and was a gut reaction from the United States with Britain as a lap dog following in their footsteps. There was no way they were going to find Osama Bin Laden in the vast territory and cave complex. That was the whole objective of the war and they failed, as it was doomed to failure.[610]

> By bombing everything that moved and asking questions afterwards, the Taleban seems to have been defeated – but we haven't yet won the peace. The main objective was to get rid of the terrorists' leader and his minions – and they have not been found.[611]

> The war in Afghanistan was ostensibly against terrorists, but has killed, wounded and rendered homeless some of the poorest people on earth, living in the harshest conditions of extreme heat and cold and famine – without capturing the terrorists.[612]

Importantly then, for some observers the outcome of the military operation in Afghanistan affected its perceived legitimacy. They seemed particularly aggrieved that not only had military force been used initially, but also that its intended result – the capture of Bin Laden and the destruction of Al Qaeda – had not occurred. Unlike previous conflicts which were short and decisive, observers' discussions of the Afghanistan War

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[610] MO C2908, female, born 1964.
[611] MO G1416, female, born 1922.
[612] MO G1041, female, born 1925.

often pertained to an extra dimension in which the wisdom of using military force was questioned retrospectively as conditions worsened. Observers' perspectives on the legitimacy of the use of force increasingly involved discussion of its utility alongside interpretations of its initial moral or political justification.

It is however, important to point out that nearly half of the observers considered in this chapter did not believe the British campaign was a justifiable use of military force and that a creeping belief in the futility of the conflict only compounded this initial characterisation rather than altered it. It is a subtle distinction, but important nevertheless; very few observers described the military outcomes of the invasion and occupation as having changed their views on the legitimacy of the British campaign. Thus, despite an identification of different circumstances when compared to previous short and decisive conflicts, the manner in which they understood legitimacy remained fundamentally the same. They once again interpreted legitimacy by constructing a narrative of national identity centred on defence against aggression, not whether the use of force had been successful. Among those who did not support British involvement in the initial intervention, observers were unwilling to establish either the Taliban regime or Al Qaeda as a legitimate or sufficient threat. Neither had attacked Britain, or invaded a neighbour or an ally. Contemporary circumstances were crucial in determining what observers wrote but, as in all cases I have considered, they had to be contextualised and given meaning by referring to pre-existing ideas and narratives.

Similarly, observers confronted Britain's Afghanistan campaign by referring to what they knew about the region itself and its inhabitants. As in the previous Kosovo conflict, constructions of an Afghan Other often rested on ideas of backwardness, hardship, tribalism, inhospitableness and internecine conflict:

…despite 'spinning' to the contrary, it appears that most UK troops have gone to that poor, benighted country to little other effect than to succumb to a vicious intestinal disease requiring repatriation.[613]

Afghan tribes have fought each other for hundreds of years. They are not going to stop now. Bush and Blair are living in cuckoo land if they think they can stop that.[614]

Inhospitable country, refugee problems of fleeing Muslims, mountains, no cover except caves, few access roads through the mountains…[615]

However, unlike the previous Kosovo conflict, some observers constructed a narrative of Afghan identity based specifically on a perception that they were uniquely ungovernable, unconquerable and predisposed to resist outsiders. These ideas were most often articulated as part of a characterisation of the current conflict as one that was not only misguided, but futile:

It's a bit confusing, after all we supported the Taliban against the Russians when they invaded but strange to relate the Russians are trying to be mediators and diplomats.[616]

It is impossible to win a war there [in Afghanistan] as the Taliban and Kipling knew, and the Russians found out.[617]

One observer wrote later in 2008 after the redeployment of British forces to Helmand province:

[613] MO H1541, male, born 1944.
[614] MO H1543, male, born 1930.
[615] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[616] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[617] MO G1041, female, born 1925.

132 British soldiers have lost their lives in Afghanistan. British forces have been in action out there before – as early as 1839 and I am not sure what they can really achieve. Bring our boys and girls safely home.[618]

Another wrote at length:

My great grandfather fought his way through the Khyber Pass in the 1890s in a bid to bring Afghanistan under control and here we are over a hundred years later trying to do the same thing. No-one has yet succeeded in taming this country of war lords and ungovernable tribesmen, so why we are embroiled in the problem again is beyond my understanding. We should have learnt from the Russians' failure in the 1980s. If the might of the Soviet Union couldn't bring this country to heel, then there really isn't much point in anyone else trying. After September 11 attacks, the USA had to be seen to be taking some sort of action and tried to destroy camps within Afghanistan that they said were training terrorists for al-Quaida and they threatened to overthrow the Taliban government if they didn't hand over Osama Bin Laden and others. This dragged them into an alliance with unstable warlords against the Taliban, eventually dragging the British in too to support them. It is an utter disaster, a war that cannot be won.[619]

The possibility of armed conflict prompted observers to articulate Britain's identity by expressing the alien character of the peoples against whom, or on whose behalf, force was being used. In Afghanistan allusions to empire and Britain's imperial Afghan Wars were not celebrated, but served as a warning that Britain had been involved in the region before, and yet remained separate and distinguishable from it. Observers' perspectives on the Afghanistan War – whether it was justifiable and whether it could be won – were informed by invocations of failed attempts at imperial conquest, and a stereotypical

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[618] MO H3821, male, born 1952.
[619] MO W1813, female, born 1950.

assessment of Afghanistan as a primitive and hostile place. Once again, the prospect of war led observers to construct a narrative of British identity by articulating historical differences with a primitive and uncivilised Afghan Other.[620]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of observers' discussions of the legitimacy of the war in Afghanistan is however, the extent to which they were *unsure* whether it was right or wrong. During the previous Gulf and Kosovo wars a number of observers had described how it was impossible to arrive at a definitive conclusion about the legitimacy of those conflicts. In relation to the Afghanistan War, a much greater proportion of observers were similarly unable to arrive at a clear conclusion. Of the fifty-five observers whose responses I have considered in this chapter, twenty did not offer a specific judgement on the legitimacy of Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan War, contrasting the twenty-four who believed it was not legitimate and the six who did. Frequently, those who were not certain described the difficulty of reconciling arguments both for and against military intervention:

I read everything and agree with most commentators and letters, those stressing food aid and those advocating war, those talking of support for Pakistan and refugee camps and those saying we've ignored them too long, but I don't know what to think myself. I think there must be another way rather than outright war, surely that is what the terrorists want, to cause devastation on a world wide scale and set Islam against the West.[621]

Afghanistan is another problem area. Part of me says 'get out of it and let them get on with their own war' and the other part says 'if we do that many innocent people would have to live under the Taliban which is not a bundle of fun.' I am however, closer to 'get out' than 'stay there'. Let the

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[620] Something discussed by: Barkawi, "'Small Wars'".
[621] MO W632, female, born 1941.

Taliban rule and see how long they can last. They all fall eventually: Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin and the rest, but in the meantime they have done untold damage.[622]

These observers were interested and concerned by Britain's involvement in a military conflict in Afghanistan and, as in the previous Kosovo conflict, confusion, ambivalence or ambiguity within responses should not be read as apathy. The campaign was characterised as a complicated one, involving both the threat from international terrorism and the humanitarian abuses of Afghanistan's ruling regime. These competing ideas were difficult for some to organise into a coherent narrative of legitimacy or lack thereof.

Others writing after the initial defeat of the Taliban in 2001 and 2002 were not persuaded of the justification of the conflict. They deferred judgement, suggesting that it remained unclear whether it had been right to use military force:

To everyone's surprise –and I think that is probably not much of an overstatement – the Taleban has crumbled in large areas of Afghanistan. Some papers and commentators are gloating over the people who called for an end to the war and I'll admit that my own gloom was too pessimistic. However we are far from achieving the original goal – capturing Bin Laden and making the Al Quaida network inoperative.[623]

I am not sure about this war. Yes, the old regime was awful but so many people died in this war, and we still have to see what the new regime is going to be like. I reserve judgment until 5 or 10 years have passed and we can see the results.[624]

I suppose I must reluctantly concede that something had to be done about Afghanistan vis-à-vis the Taliban, and there are faint but promising signs of better prospects ahead for that country. (I do take

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[622] MO T3775, male, born 1936.
[623] MO B2240, male, born 1921.
[624] MO H2911, female, born 1964.

a particular interest in it because I have been there, in 1976)… As with all wars, that in Afghanistan may have solved one problem but it has created a host of others.[625]

These responses underscore the much different context that observers had to make sense of in the years following 2001 relative to previous, shorter conflicts in the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo wars.

A sense of confusion or obscurity was engendered further by the apparently obscure or confusing state of the military campaign. Some observers described being unsure of exactly what was going on in Afghanistan at all in the years following the initial invasion. They represented the war as difficult to understand and peripheral for Britain:

I am not so sure there is still a war in Afghanistan. As far as I can see now the Taliban have been defeated things are very much back to what passes for normal in that country.[626]

Taliban have been finally defeated but Al-Quaida still flourishes and must be defeated. Talk of aerial bombardment and friendly fire. Have we won? NO Flags and no celebrations.[627]

One observer reflected on the Afghanistan campaign as the Iraq War loomed in early 2003:

I hope and pray that this war [in Iraq] can be avoided but I am not hopeful – if things go awry then I will attempt to keep some sort of diary but I got fed up with Afghanistan one – the whole thing seemed to just tail off. I don't think this coming one will. At the moment it seems too ghastly to contemplate.[628]

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[625] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[626] MO H1543, male, born 1930.
[627] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[628] MO B1771, female, born 1936.

Responses like these contributed to broader sense that the war in Afghanistan was not as urgent or as important an engagement for Britain in its early stages. Indeed, by 2002 observers repeatedly described a military intervention that had simply fell off the agenda:

What war? All I know is American troops entered that country and later some of Britain's did, what for? I'm not sure. I haven't read that they've achieved anything after killing and driving off some Taliban members.[629]

What are were talking about here? Is there a war in Afghanistan? How little we hear about it if there is![630]

I can't remember much about this war. I don't think we were told a lot about what actually happened and what loss of life there was on both sides. I think our troops were eventually brought out but are American troops still there? I don't know.[631]

Now, in October 2002, the war in Afghanistan seems to have vanished from the news, and I find this in itself quite sinister, given the problems of that warlord-fragmented country…[632]

There has been merely a deafening silence [regarding Afghanistan]. I know the British army are still out there simply because my brother-in-law (a UK army medic) was recently there sorting out outbreaks of some gastric bug. Otherwise you could be forgiven for thinking it had all vanished again.[633]

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[629] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[630] MO B1533, female, born 1926.
[631] MO C1713, female, born 1948.
[632] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[633] MO C2844, female, born 1960.

Observers were collectively less sure about Britain's role in the Afghanistan War - and whether it should be involved at all - than other cohorts of observers had been regarding the Falklands and Gulf conflicts, and the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003. The ambiguity that is prevalent within their responses was underscored by a pervasive sense that Afghanistan was a far-off and unconquerable place - its inhabitants alien and extraordinarily resistant to outside intervention - and that the conflict, in its early stages at least, had been a peripheral non-event.

In fact the Iraq War drew focus away from that in Afghanistan as observers began to discuss them interchangeably. Typical examples described how "Afghanistan, now Iraq… are not really settled"[634] and that "After the mess in Afghanistan they [the UK and USA] now have a mess in Iraq."[635] The elision continued after the redeployment of large numbers of British troops to Helmand Province in 2006. Observers described how "the reason for their [British soldiers'] presence in Afghanistan, Iraq may well be as incomprehensible to the personnel involved as it is to ourselves",[636] that "Iraq and Afghanistan seem to have no end, with more men dying every day"[637] and following the ending of British combat operations in Iraq in 2009, that "our military people swap the frying pan of Iraq for the fire of Afghanistan."[638] Observers were far more clear and critical about the war in Iraq and this affected what they wrote about Britain's involvement in Afghanistan. Though many observers were critical about Operation Herrick it is evident that they also wrote about it with a lesser intensity – at least when compared to responses concerning other recent conflicts - and found it difficult to narrate Britain's identity within it.

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[634] MO T2741, male, born 1921.
[635] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[636] MO N1592, female, born 1931.
[637] MO T3902, female, born 1984.
[638] MO B1654, male, born 1931.

What explains this pervasive ambiguity within responses written about the Afghanistan War when compared with other cases? It was not the case that observers were unable to access media or news information. Nor could it be explained because of the material costs of the war which were higher than the more controversial and polarising conflict in Iraq. In fact, it was I suggest, the manner in which observers interpreted and reconstructed narratives of *British* identity which explains this puzzlingly confused and ambivalent attitude toward the Afghanistan War. Indeed, unlike previous conflicts, observers did not draw widely on popular memories of the Second World War and incorporate the current conflict within a narrative of British resistance to aggression or dictatorship. Their discussions of legitimacy were not clarified by comparisons with legitimate British resistance to German expansionism or the evil of the Nazis. Its particular circumstances – as an intervention, on anti-terror grounds, against an unrecognised regime which had not invaded or threatened any of its neighbours – did not permit comparison with popular memories in the same way that previous conflicts had. More ambiguous allusions to empire or the Soviet war did not create any similar sense of national cohesion or a common sense of the past. Despite its singular strategic, political and military importance for the British state, Britain's involvement in Afghanistan remained at arm's length for observers. The conflict represents a fundamental departure from previous cases in that it did not help to sustain a broader reconstruction of a morally assured and widely celebrated narrative of British historical identity, the foundation of which was Britain's legitimate struggle against Nazi Germany

What observers wrote here confirms a wider finding within this research; namely that legitimacy was understood most confidently when it could be connected to or contrasted with Britain's celebrated resistance to the expansionary aggression of Nazi Germany, and that British *entry* into World War Two in particular was thought of as a

crucible of Britain's contemporary identity. Due to the circumstances of the present, connections between the present and the past which had underscored an assured and moral narrative of British identity in previous conflicts began to fragment. They were replaced, as I show presently, by a more uncomfortable propensity to link the conflict culture, religion and race, rather than national history. What observers' reactions to the Afghanistan campaign demonstrate is the importance of small wars in recreating a sense of national identity, but also the manner in which their circumstances can radically alter the connections that are made. The conflict was paradoxically both thought to be peripheral by observers, but also disruptive in terms of its impact on broader interpretations of identity and the invocation of popular memories.

The Military, Counter-Insurgency and Occupation

Despite its minimal contribution when compared to that of the United States,[639] observers often wanted to make sense of a conflict in which Britain was a participant. They drew on familiar ideas of indiscriminate and unwarranted bombing as previous cohorts had during the Gulf and Kosovo wars. No observers expressed outright support for such a strategy. Indeed in only one case did an observer suggest that "The bombing seems to be having an effect on the Taliban and the Americans and Northern Alliance are moving towards Kabul."[640] Yet the same observer went on to highlight the apparent unpopularity of this strategy by writing, "I get the impression that is why there is so much bombing now they

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[639] The initial military operation in Afghanistan was undertaken primarily by the US air force in support of Afghan Northern Alliance force, and with assistance from American and British special forces. The Royal Air Force did not take part in air operations in Afghanistan until 2004. Royal Air Force, "Operation HERRICK; Afghanistan". Online, available at: https://www.raf.mod.uk/currentoperations/herrick-afghanistan.cfm (Accessed 20-10-2017).

[640] MO W1918, female, born 1951.

are trying to get to a point where they can make more progress on the ground which would be more acceptable to a lot of people."[641]

In fact, most who wrote about the initial campaign were critical of the use of air power which they believed to be unduly destructive or likely to galvanise resistance. Often however observers stressed that the bombing was being undertaken by the American military, and that it revealed an American heavy-handedness (a theme to which I return shortly):

> Carpet bombing of mountains by veteran B-52 heavy bombers seems a bit over the top… I saw civil buildings hit and dead and injured civilians and was sickened. Even today if you bomb from a safe high level you can't be sure if you've picked out a true legitimate target or where the bombs will land…[642]

> To see the state of Afghanistan compared to the USA is lamentable and yet the Americans are still bombing the bare hills and plains. The Afghans have always been a tough race, proud and independent so one can only admire their resistance.[643]

> I think the excessive use of force (bombing) has been unproductive because it was always futile to think that Bin Laden was the sort of person who could be bombed into submission, knowing the complicated landscape as he does.[644]

Another observer, writing during the initial deployment of American and British forces to Afghanistan suggested that ground forces would be needed to secure the region:

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[641] MO W1918, female, born 1951.
[642] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[643] MO Y2498, female, born 1912.
[644] MO F1560, female, born 1921.

I still feel that any success in Afghanistan will be gained not by bombing but by painstaking, time consuming and very ingenious infiltration and intelligence work by ground forces. I agree with those who feel that bombing is not the way to win this 'war'.[645]

After the apparent success of the campaign in disabling the Taliban, she continued to stress the incompatibility of a bombing strategy with the perceived aims of the intervention itself:

I suppose those of us who had doubts about the strategy of bombing rather than of guerrilla tactics to smoke out Osama Bin Laden have been proved wrong. Certainly reports of the Afghan reaction to the routing of the Taliban seems joyous enough so some good had come of it but the spider at the centre of the web, who has now boasted on video that he was behind September 11, is still at large.[646]

Like those who wrote about the conflicts in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo, observers were critical of the use of air power as they believed it to be both unethical and dangerous for civilians, and ineffective in breaking resistance or morale. Thus, observers did not believe that bombing alone could be justified as part of a humanitarian intervention or as an anti-terror operation; it was thought to be making life worse for ordinary Afghans while failing to seriously affect Al Qaeda or Bin Laden. Despite the different context of the Afghanistan War, observers again articulated an understanding that the contemporary campaign was indiscriminate, undesirable and illegitimate.

The bombing was however, an American operation. Observers were able to describe it as antithetical to a broader belief in Britain's identity as a legitimate military power but also suggest that this use of air power demonstrated the belligerence of its ally,

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[645] MO W633, female, born 1942.
[646] MO W633, female, born 1942.

the United States. It was marked out as a 'lamentable' and 'excessive' use of force by the Americans, contributing to an interpretation in which Britain was thought to be moderate and reasonable by comparison.

Few observers were concerned with representing the ground combat that was taking place in Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002. Those who did write about it described a war about which little was known, and which had seemingly settled without obvious triumph or defeat for British forces:

Now Kabul is free it looks as though the Taliban are retreating to Kandahar and may be much harder to defeat there. The problem now is restoring the capital to order and installing a democratic government. At least aid can be distributed and the horror of mass starvation is receding… Breathe a sigh of relief an interim administration is taking shape leaving out the old warlords and including all the different ethnic groups plus 2 women. The fighting is almost over and sanity can return to this poor country. No one thought it would be this quickly resolved. The basic win situation has been accomplished now the hard talking starts.[647]

I have been so long and so late in doing my writing that the war in Afghanistan is what is called "over" and it must be somewhat better. There are cars in the streets, the zoo is open again... Homes are ruined, families split up, there are no crops in the fields, the list of miseries is long and terrible. But there must be more hope in the air, and I do hope that one day it will once again be a place of ancient history and with tourists taking trade there.[648]

During the previous Kosovo conflict, the introduction of a small peacekeeping force had been interpreted positively by some observers, representing soldiers as considerate, humane and charitable. Observers wrote similar accounts regarding the deployment to Afghanistan after the apparent triumph of American and British forces over the Taliban:

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[647] MO W632, female, born 1941.
[648] MO C2570, female, born 1921.

As in Sierra Leone, I think that outside forces (including British) have contributed hugely to any peace in the country.[649]

Although it may not be much reported, soldiers often get involved with the local population, trying to make life better, especially for the children. I remember a newspaper feature from Kabul commenting that 'the relief agencies (the Red Cross in this instance) like to think they are the only ones who care' but that, unlike them, the soldiers were helping people with their own money in their spare time. I have heard several reports of Red Cross workers treating soldiers with contempt and quite unprovoked rudeness (whether they were in British uniform or UN blue berets).[650]

Deployed as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), British ground forces were largely confined to Kabul and its surrounds from 2001 until 2005, with only a few hundred frontline troops deployed to the country at any one time. It is then unsurprising that few observers considered frontline personnel in depth during this period. The initial intervention in Afghanistan was narrated by observers largely as the Kosovo campaign had been; a bombing campaign with minimal ground assistance. Though peacekeeping duties were often viewed positively, with Britain's soldiers identified as particularly humane, competent and compassionate, there lacked any sense of victory or triumph.

From 2003 the Taliban, having retreated to remote areas within Afghanistan or over the border into Pashtun areas of Pakistan, began an insurgency campaign against American, British and Afghan National Army forces. The situation was addressed in 2003 as NATO took control of ISAF and introduced a new plan for the phased occupation of the entire country through the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams

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[649] MO F1560, female, born 1921.
[650] MO P1326, female, born 1938.

(PRTs).[651] By 2006, British forces were deployed to Helmand Province in the south of Afghanistan and were immediately engaged in an intense struggle to occupy and hold the area's infrastructure and major towns.[652] At its peak the British deployment in Helmand reached 9500 combat troops stationed at 137 bases.[653]

As Britain's forces became engaged in a difficult counter-insurgency,[654] observers began to place frontline soldiers at the centre of their responses, revealing a personal and individualistic focus on their motivations and character. Support for the military was impressed by one observer who described how she "did manage to persuade my son's headmistress that she should bring the whole school out to cheer the local regiments on their parade of honour after their return from Afghanistan and Iraq."[655] Others however were not enthused by the use of Britain's professional, volunteer forces in a conflict lacking a clear justification:

> I have a low regard for the armed forces as a whole, and I feel particularly insulted by government ministers regularly telling me how proud we should collectively feel of our servicemen. I accept absolutely that it is the government, not the squaddies themselves, who choose which wars to fight – but people who join the army do so knowing that they can be sent anywhere to fight anyone at the whim of the government of the day, so they are just as culpable (in my opinion) of any immoral military action.[656]

Again, observers did not believe that military force itself was illegitimate, though some were critical of the volunteer or professional status of serving soldiers. For these

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[651] Fairweather, *The Good War*.

[652] The Helmand redeployment began with an initial force of 3300 personnel, combat troops drawn primarily from 16 Air Assault Brigade, 3rd Parachute regiment.

[653] BBC News, "UK troops in Afghanistan: Timeline of key events", 2015. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35159951 (Accessed 31-01-2018).

[654] Robert Egnell, "Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan: what now for British counterinsurgency?", *International Affairs*. 87, no. 2 (2011): 297-315.

[655] MO A3434, female, born 1965.

[656] MO B4236, male, born 1928.

individuals, the contentiousness of the campaign in Afghanistan affected the status of the soldiers who were fighting it:

> The army today seems to want to be loved and appreciated, but how can they expect that when many people are totally opposed to their involvement in the first place? I totally disagree with the government's attempts to get us to love and honour these people who in my name are killing innocent people… I do feel grateful to those in the First and Second World Wars who gave their lives for the greater good. There is no doubt that without their sacrifice, the world would have been a much darker place and we have much to thank them for. But I do find it more difficult to be grateful to members of today's armed forces because the wars they have become embroiled in have not protected us and made us safer, but have contributed to the spread of terrorism and made our lives much less safe.[657]

This response in particular reveals the extent to which observers' perspectives on Britain's military forces was circumstantial. Not only the nature of the counter-insurgency combat, but also observers' ambivalence toward to wider aims and legitimacy of the war, affected what they wrote about the role of soldiers within it. In doing so they drew on popular memories that helped to explain the present, suggesting that the ambiguity of contemporary military service could be contrasted with the moral clarity of sacrifice during the world wars, pursued for 'the greater good.' Popular memory of conscription or mass mobilisation in the Second World War could serve to undermine the perceived adoration of professional forces, but crucially did not disrupt a pervasive belief in the legitimacy of British military force itself. Indeed, it reinforced a sense of morality, legitimacy and unity in the Second World War against which contemporary deployments could be contrasted.

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[657] MO W1813, female, born 1950.

However, few observers were critical about Britain's military forces, despite often protesting Britain's continued involved in the Afghanistan conflict. Most who wrote about serving soldiers and ground forces were concerned with reconciling the apparently peripheral and ambiguous status of the Afghanistan War - now frequently elided with a much more unpopular deployment in Iraq - with the status of the soldiers who fought it. Here British forces were represented as *victims* of the war rather than the prosecutors of 'immoral action' or an unjustified intervention. Observers often wrote about their personal sympathy for soldiers dutifully struggling through a difficult and ambiguous set of circumstances:

> However one might feel about those who voluntarily sign up to the modern-day services, and I personally regard this as a curious career choice, I do feel that we ought to show at least a modicum of respect to service people, especially since they do more conflict resolution and peacekeeping these days. Recent press coverage of shops and pubs refusing entry to service people in uniform are rather depressing. If such treatment was still meted out on the grounds of colour or gender then the government would come down on those responsible like the proverbial ton of bricks.[658]

> I shake my head in disbelief at current local wars in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere on the planet. The least I can do is to buy a poppy in recognition of the men and women who were caught up in a conflict they were expected to serve. I empathise with those parents whose sons or daughters have been killed or maimed during their service in Iraq or Afghanistan. Wherever there is suffering caused by man's inhumanity to man, often implicating innocent victims, I am sensitive to people's heartbreak.[659]

Such responses drew on a language of loss and sacrifice, and argued that soldiers ought to be shielded from blame for the circumstances in which they found themselves. Quite

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[658] MO B4291, details not available.
[659] MO W3176, male, born 1941.

clearly, a pervasive characterisation of the conflict as one in which the legitimacy of British involvement was lacking or unclear affected what observers wrote about the status of the soldiers fighting it. For others this engendered a direct contrast between military heroism and the 'political' decisions on which the conflict in Afghanistan was blamed:

> I've never had any experience of the armed services, but I have total admiration for anyone who has. For an 18 year old guy to join the army and then get involved in a war miles and miles away in places like Afghanistan or Iraq, all for something like £6.80 and hour is beyond belief. To hear some idle, lazy, opinionated 'oiyk' mouthing off their objections to war and conflict, and aiming their bile at the individuals in the armed services appals me... they ought to vent their spleen at the government rather than the 'front-line Tommys'.[660]

> I support the Help for Heroes campaign, and wear the wristband and have the car sticker. I also have the car sticker for the yellow ribbon which is to show support for the British Armed Forces. I support the soldiers, it is the politics/government I do not trust or agree with.[661]

> I do have some sympathy for 'our' soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly those of course who have returned injured or traumatised (or dead). I feel it's the politicians who are the real villains. But in war, very ordinary people can commit the most appalling acts, as well as acts of great kindness and self-sacrifice. I find it hard to understand how decent people can bomb third world towns, cities and villages… I would hate to be a soldier out there, and do have respect for the courage of soldiers in battle.[662]

An allusion to the bombing of the 'third world' reinforced the perceived illegitimacy of the contemporary campaign, but also created a sense in which the use of force in Afghanistan was less heroic than other conventional deployments. Heroism was again

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[660] MO D3906, male, born 1966.
[661] MO T3902, female, born 1982.
[662] MO B3968, male, born 1966.

linked to ideas of even, conventional combat. Sympathy for soldiers was, for some, linked less to the risks they face, and more to a notion that they could not live up – through no fault of their own – to a particular heroic military identity:

As the conflict in Afghanistan escalated from 2006, observers more frequently wrote about the increasing death toll suffered by British forces. The apparent lack of a clear justification for the deployment of military force was made more obvious by the 'waste' of soldiers' lives:

I think that we should bring all the troops home from these two countries [Afghanistan and Iraq]; I don't really feel that they are achieving anything and too many young lives are being wasted in these campaigns. I feel that this is Tony Blair's fault by agreeing with everything George Bush said. I wonder how Blair or Bush would feel now, if their sons were coming home seriously wounded, or dead? Every day there seems to be the announcement in the media of another young soldier's death and they don't always mention his comrades who were wounded and who will have to live the rest of their lives with missing limbs and other horrendous injuries. When these young men are older and frailer will they be cared for and given the help they most certainly will need by the country that sent them to war?[663]

In fact, the war in Afghanistan claimed more British lives than any of the other conflicts I consider within this research, and it represented the largest loss of British soldiers within a single overseas operation since the Korean War.[664] Between 2001 and 2014 some 454 British personnel were killed in Afghanistan.[665] Their repatriation through the Wiltshire town of Wootton Bassett became an important aspect of observers' responses during this

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[663] MO H2639, female, born 1940.
[664] See, The Economist, "British military deaths", 2016. Online, available at: https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/07/daily-chart-2 (Accessed 20-10-2017).
[665] Ministry of Defence, "Operations in Afghanistan", 2016. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/afghanistan (Accessed 16-10-2017).

period.[666] As Anthony King has argued, public reception of Afghanistan's returning war dead revealed a departure from previous modes of remembrance and represented a shift toward a more personalised and domesticated process of military commemoration.[667] Personal empathy was a key feature of observers' responses, yet for some, this was linked to a critical evaluation of the utility of Britain's interventions in those regions:

> But still we have wars, the repatriations of bodies through the streets of Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire, the names read out on the radio, the bickering about whether or not we have enough helicopters in Afghanistan, whether said helicopters have enough armour, whether there are enough ground troops; on and on it goes, more deaths, more reactionary terrorism here at home, more troops, more propaganda that we're doing the right thing etc. Not much in the way of questioning 'why we're there'?[668]

In previous conflicts, particularly that in Kosovo in 1999, observers had in some cases suggested that the use of ground forces was preferably to aerial bombardment as it was perceived to be a more legitimate and humane method of warfare. While observers perhaps did not see either the Kosovo or Afghanistan conflicts necessarily as a stark choice between air or land operations, it is evident that as casualties mounted observers willingness to support ground combat was tested too. In Kosovo it could not be known how observers would have reacted to the use of infantry and ground forces, or a lengthy conflict or occupation, as these remained hypothetical. In Afghanistan, when such operations became realised, they were not popular. However, the loss of British soldiers was always considered alongside the *reasons* for their loss. Again, observers were unsure

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[666] The Guardian, "Wootton Bassett timeline", 2011. Online, available at:
https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/31/wootton-bassett-repatriations-timeline (Accessed 09-11-2016).
[667] King, "The Afghan War".
[668] MO B4291, details not available.

why British soldiers were dying in increasing numbers during the later stages of the Afghanistan War:

> The war in Afghanistan was supposed to be a war on terror with the direct aim of capturing Bin Laden and destroying Al-Quaida. Seven years later we still hear daily about the fighting, the loss of life and the casualties but no a mention of the two things which spawned the action… Most people I speak with associate the occupation with the opium production. The opium fields of Afghanistan provide the West with drugs which are destroying society and causing a massive increase in criminal activity. If it is this which we are partly trying to wipe out can we, after all the years of fighting and all the loss of young soldiers' lives, actually see any difference?[669]

Likewise, other observers believed the repatriation of those killed in Afghanistan drew attention to the futility or illegitimacy of the conflict itself:

> The number of military personnel killed as the result of our presence in Afghanistan has now reached 165 (on May 31st), with 12 souls being lost this month alone. Many people throughout the country are asking a) why are we there? B) what is it costing when this country is in such dire economic straits? And C) what have we achieved and what can we hope to achieve by being there? Answers, if there can be any, on a postcard please to a certain G. Brown and T. Blair.[670]

> Elsewhere in the world British soldiers continue to die and receive horrendous injuries in Afghanistan, and were set to keep dying as the year progressed. It was a futile conflict if ever there was one. If only politicians had more interest in the past.[671]

By 2008 and 2009, observers were increasingly focused on the deaths of British soldiers.[672] While most were careful not to criticise the character of soldiers or undermine

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[669] MO M3408, female, born 1948.
[670] MO D1602, male, born 1942.
[671] MO H1543, male, born 1930.

their sacrifice, many described their deaths through a language of waste and futility, in some cases focusing on the town of Wootton Basset as a site of repatriation. The prospect of increasing military deaths from 2006 did not delegitimise the conflict itself, but meant observers focused with greater urgency on why Britain was continuing to fight it. This growth in concern for frontline soldiers also demonstrates an important factor in observers' collected responses, namely the much greater focus on the British Army relative to either its Naval or Air forces in the later periods of occupation in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The specific military contexts of both, widely conceptualised by observers as counter-insurgency or 'guerrilla' wars, reintroduced the central figure of the frontline soldier, resulting in a more personal and sympathetic account of military combat[673] relative to the sanitised and ethically ambiguous aerial bombardments pursued in previous conflicts.

Observers imagined what the war was like and, as in all conflicts I have considered in this research, representations of Britain's ground forces specifically often stressed the qualities of 'soldier heroes'; courage, discipline, professionalism, determination and martial prowess.[674] The pervasive characterisation of soldiers as the victims of governmental or elite failures – victims of the war which they were sent to fight – demonstrates how observers were mostly concerned with reconciling a belief in Britain's celebrated and legitimate identity as a military power, and a widespread belief in the heroic identity of military personnel, with its contemporary role in a complicated, ambiguous or unwarranted conflict in Afghanistan. Soldiers were increasingly described

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[672] British forces sustained casualties much more rapidly following the redeployment to Helmand Province, peaking in 2009. See: BBC News, "UK military deaths in Afghanistan", 2015. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10634173 (Accessed 04/10/2016).

[673] For a consideration of the ways in which contemporary conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have reordered the manner in which military sacrifice and remembrance are constituted within Britain, see: King, "The Afghan War".

[674] The Soldier-Hero is a figure with a broader history and pedigree. I suggest here that such imagery and imagination was rekindled, at least within observers' responses, by involvement in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. See: Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

by observers as an embodiment of Britain's identity in the conflict itself; led into unjustifiable violence by political failure. The redeployment to Helmand, centred on the frontline forces of the British Army, revealed how observers conceived of military service as an important marker for Britain's identity, sustained by but separable from contemporary circumstance, despite "only a tiny proportion of the population [having had] any direct experience of the army as it is today".[675]

However, it is important to emphasise that observers' perspectives on the British military were framed heavily by the conflict in Iraq which was understood by most observers who wrote about it to have been unjustified. Observers who wrote about soldierly victimhood in Afghanistan from 2006 often did so with controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003, and its subsequent decent into bloody occupation, in mind. Thus it is particularly striking to note how the specific circumstances of Britain's longest and bloodiest single engagement for over fifty years were so easily elided with the less costly campaign (in terms of British fatalities) in Iraq,[676] and elicited little discussion specifically when compared to the other cases I have considered in this research. Observers were not worried about body-counts or military outcomes alone. Instead, the material costs of the war were interpreted in light of its legitimacy, what was known about its circumstances, and how it related to Britain's past and identity. Observers were generally unsure about the legitimacy of the war in Afghanistan, at least in its early stages, and rapidly began to focus instead on the Iraq War; a conflict which observers discussed with much greater clarity. Though the perceived circumstances and outcomes of the Afghanistan War engendered an interpretation of victimhood, this was always

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[675] Antony Beevor, "The Army and Modern Society", in *The British Army, Manpower and Society into the Twenty-First Century,* edited by Hew Strachan (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 66.

[676] In terms of fatalities, 179 British soldiers were killed in Iraq between 2003 and 2009. See: Jack Fairweather, *A War of Choice: The British in Iraq 2003-2009* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011); BBC News, "UK military deaths in Iraq", 2016. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10637526 (Accessed 04/10/2016); Ministry of Defence, "Operations in Iraq", 2016. Online, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/fields-of-operation/iraq (Accessed 04/10/2016).

foregrounded by broader perceptions of legitimacy, which were in turn affected heavily by observers' interpretations of the contemporaneous war in Iraq.

Leaders, Leadership and Tony Blair

As in previous cases, observers related the Afghanistan war to the leadership of the Prime Minister. Writing in the immediate wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, some were clearly enthused by his decisive action and wrote about his leadership favourably. They described the Blair government as an active player in the international sphere, helping to orchestrate a military response in Afghanistan:

> Tony Blair's speech at the labour party conference was dynamic. He has picked up the message of the friends and relations of those who died on September 11th, that their memory requires a targeted response to the fanatics but also a targeted response to the causes of fanaticism... Tony Blair did the right thing in going to talk to all the Arab countries. He took on the chin their candid opinions in public but said they were more amenable in private. He may be classed as Bush's envoy but now we know what Syria's and other Arab leaders think.[677]

In a manner similar to previous responses to the Kosovo intervention, Blair was often considered to be an active force on the international scene, regardless of their perceived effectiveness:

> Tony Blair goes to the east to try and keep up the support of the Muslim allies and get the peace talks going again in Israel but he is not very successful. All the Muslims seem to think there is too much bombing in Afghanistan and too many civilians being killed.[678]

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[677] MO W632, female, born 1941.
[678] MO W1918, female, born 1951.

Mr Blair seems to have been all over the world. I think he has tried to act as peacemaker but in this country the media have rounded on him especially since things are not exactly perfect at home.[679]

Such responses revealed a continuity between responses written in 1999 and those written in 2001 and 2002. The Blair government was considered on the whole to be an active force in the international sphere and Britain's position as a bridge between various parties was viewed favourably by most observers. Indeed, in only one case during the initial intervention in Afghanistan did an observer complain that "Blair was hoping for a Falklands Factor."[680] In the immediate wake of the September 11th attacks, observers characterised Blair as a leader attempting to lead in a complex situation and were, despite broad scepticism regarding the military intervention in Afghanistan, sympathetic to his efforts.

However, far fewer observers discussed leadership in relation to Afghanistan compared to those who connected it to the previous Falklands War, or, crucially, to the immediately subsequent invasion of Iraq. This is due, I argue, to a pervasive perception that the intervention in Afghanistan was particularly difficult to make sense of. Few observers were assured of its justification and therefore few made specific judgements about the Blair government's decision to commit British forces. Observers who wrote about Blair's leadership were focused primarily, as they had been during the Kosovo crisis, on his attempts to build multi-lateral and international consensus following the September 11th terrorist attacks, rather than the specifics of a military operation which they widely characterised as peripheral and difficult to make sense of. This brief window

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[679] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[680] MO G1041, female, born 1925.

of support from observers was largely shattered with the onset of the Iraq crisis, during which most were highly critical of Blair's policies and, importantly, associated him personally with a desire to use military force without justification. It is interesting to note in retrospect the apparent support for the Blair government's foreign policy and leadership style during the Kosovo intervention in the initial response to the 11 September attacks. Within responses written throughout this period Blair seemed to embody for some observers a sense of national importance, increased diplomatic activity or a heightened British world role.

The USA and the Absence of Diplomacy

Unlike responses to previous directives, observers did not discuss the United Nations or other international institutions at length. In fact, as I have alluded to above, they often conceived of the Afghanistan War as one that was largely peripheral for Britain. This sentiment was articulated parallel to a representation of the conflict as one that was not particularly diplomatically controversial or divisive. This was a result, I suggest, of the circumstance of the initial intervention against the Taliban having been directed at an unrecognised regime.[681]

What observers wrote about the international context during the Afghanistan War centred on discussion of Britain's ally in the conflict, the United States. They wrote how "My real worry is that as long as we are tied to the US we could become targets of so called terrorists"[682] and "I don't like us being jackal to the American tiger."[683] Observers

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[681] The intervention in Afghanistan took place against the Islamic Emirate which was – in 2001 – only recognised by Pakistan. Certainly, the strategic interest of the leading international powers, notably Russia and China, aligned over the issue which further dampened the possibility of diplomatic dispute. See: Rashid, *Taliban*, 5.
[682] MO W2588, female, born 1923.
[683] MO H2410, female, born 1929.

suggested that the Afghanistan War was the product of purely American interests and revealed an American identity that was aggressive, irrational and reactionary:

> The war in Afghanistan is a war of American revenge and expansion. 'If you are not with us, you are against us' says it all.[684]

> …but I think the current events in Iraq and Afghanistan will make us more enemies and lead to more attacks on the West, not less, especially because we are so tied to the Americans who are so ignorant of the outside world and arrogant about imposing their own values on other countries.[685]

> On Friday, 14th June, 'The Guardian' published a statement by 65 prominent Americans, including Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, etc. in which they stated their resistance to the rhetoric and public policy that has developed in the USA in the aftermath of 11th September. This comes as a breath of fresh air. What a relief it is to discover that there seems to be a burgeoning campaign against undemocratic American government hegemony. Their statement is headed 'We won't deny our Consciences'…[686]

Some observers clearly felt that association with American policy not only revealed Britain's weakness, but was not in Britain's interests.

The conflict was, of course, placed within the broader context of the War on Terror declared by President George Bush as a response to the September 11th attacks. While not denying the great suffering of that event, observers frequently interpreted reaction to it as an indication of the perceived differences in national identity:

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[684] MO L2669, male, born 1926.
[685] MO P3213, female, born 1966.
[686] MO H2410, female, born 1929.

> If America could have done something quite outside their national character instead of swearing to get Bin Laden "dead or alive" within hours of the atrocities on 11th September they might have scuppered the ongoing organisations that are planning at this moment further acts of terrorism.[687]

> No one in Britain is interested, we've had terrorist attacks here for years, mostly from the IRA and did America care. I've stayed on a farm, visited cafés and travelled on trains, been in pubs, I have not overheard a word about these attacks or of the actions, chiefly bombing, which America has taken. It is a non-event as far as the British public are concerned, and the huge media coverage is ignored.[688]

For another, a more sympathetic view of America's military response to the September 11th attacks was tempered by questioning perceptions of America abroad:

> The terrorist attacks galvanised American hearts and minds and ensured that the Middle East became top of the American agenda, after decades of dithering. America and allies could not possibly allow such an act to pass without retaliation. The Americans are right to actively seek out the terrorists who attacked them on 11th September but, and it is a big but, I feel that they should also be addressing the reason why they were attacked and this they appear to be ignoring… I feel very strongly that this is not being addressed, and I really resent the American attitude that if you do not agree with them 100% you must be against them.[689]

Within several responses the United States formed an important part of observers' discussions and revealed specific ideas about the differences between America and Britain. The American reaction to the September 11th attacks and their immediate move to use military force was perceived as evidence of a belligerent, irrational and overbearing character. Observers dissatisfaction with Britain's obviously junior position formed the

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[687] MO B2240, male, born 1921.
[688] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[689] MO G2883, female, born 1950.

basis of a construction of American identity which could be contrasted with British moderation, tolerance, understanding and caution.

For one observer, the contemporary contrast in national characters was linked to historical differences:

> No I do not think the whole world has changed since the horrific destruction of the world trade centre. Just as many people have been killed in other parts of the world and we have seen similar destruction and chaos in London during the Blitz for instance. I think the difference has been that this happened in America. No one has invaded or attacked the USA so naturally they were horrified and indignant.[690]

The circumstance of Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan War, and its link to the 11 September attacks, gave this observer an opportunity not only to attribute particular ideas of identity, but also to construct a narrative of British history rooted in the familiarity and moral clarity of British resistance during the Blitz.[691]

It is important to note that such responses were however, few in number and generally limited to the 2001 and 2002 directives. Though some individuals did engage in constructing narratives of British or American identity, based on sharp distinctions between the two, the characterisation of the conflict as one that was peripheral or poorly understood was reflected in the relative dearth of observers discussions of allied Others. They were, as with most aspects of the Afghanistan War, unable to clearly articulate a specific narrative of British identity during a conflict which was thought to be so complex and obscure.

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[690] MO Y2498, female, born 1912.
[691] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*.

The Enemy: Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Religious Extremism

Observers characterised the Afghanistan conflict as one that affected cultural and domestic society in Britain. They focused on the religious and extremist character of the enemy faced in Afghanistan, and linked the Afghanistan conflict, the War on Terror, Britain's domestic society and minority groups (namely, British Muslims).

In previous recent conflicts observers had identified a familiar enemy, framed by persistent referral to popular memories of Britain's resistance to Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler.[692] Links between contemporary enemies and those in the past formed the basis of a construction of British identity rooted in moderation, tolerance and democracy. Concerning Afghanistan, responses were written much differently. They described an enemy that did not fit this familiar mould:

> [The aim of the military intervention is to] kill if possible Osama Bin Laden and Taliban members; are there 10,000 of them dotted around the Middle East, Pakistan, and elsewhere. Big, mainly American, task force already sailing the seas there and on friendly air bases. Newspapers full of predictions, war expectations, and pictures of armour, and the terrorists' likely hiding places. Who reads this I believe very, very few are at all interested except the military minded.[693]

In another case, Bin Laden embodied the elusive and disparate character of the enemy:

> Meanwhile what of the great enemies Bin Laden and Al-Quaida? It appears that as little is known of the former today as was known eight months ago; it is no more clear whether he is dead or alive, or

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[692] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.
[693] MO A883, male, born 1933.

indeed if he is, as was, in that country. He appears as a latter-day General Ned Ludd; a person who never existed, but whose 'persona' is needed by both sides...[694]

The enemy faced in Afghanistan was described by observers as one operating below the level of the state, lacking control of state apparatus or an organised military force as the Galtieri, Hussein and Milosevic regimes had. They were a disparate group of individuals, without a diplomatic structure, who were able to hide within Afghanistan, and engage in guerrilla tactics. The differences between this 'new' enemy and those that were more familiar were identified by one observer writing in 2003:

> The conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan are misguided by the initial idea that terror has to be put down with force. We have inherited that concept from President Bush. We are not dealing with an enemy in the same mode as those of the two world wars, but dedicated guerrilla fighters, kill one and another dozen take his place, no doubt in the belief that a heavenly reward will be given them. Try fighting an adversary with those concepts to guide them, very difficult indeed.[695]

As the conflict in Afghanistan intensified into a difficult occupation from 2006, observers remained interested in identifying Britain's enemies and likewise did not describe their character or methods by reference to previous opponents or, importantly, popular memories of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Neither the Taliban nor Al Qaeda could be easily understood as expansionary, aggressive or brutal dictatorships. Osama Bin Laden was often considered to be the figure-head of Britain's opponents in Afghanistan, revealing a continued preference for focusing on a single specific individual in recent conflicts, but was thought to be an opponent unlike those encountered in Britain's immediately previous military conflicts:

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[694] MO H1541, male, born 1944.
[695] MO W565, male, born 1927.

President Bush who appears to be confident of overwhelming terrorists in so many countries doesn't appear to know any history – which I find very alarming. Afghanistan has been a problem for years – Bin Laden was not driven by poverty or envy of the West. He is/was a wealthy Saudi Arabian and his Al Quaida organisation obviously attracts fanatics.[696]

For one observer, Al Qaeda seemed particularly difficult to defeat military, given that they were so difficult to identify and were potentially shielded by allied states or regimes:

I doubt any of this [including foreign interventions] will prevent terrorism which seems to have enjoyed a filip since the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars… Just because of the follies of Afghanistan and Iraq have resulted in radicalisation and associated terrorism, I do not feel as though this merits such limitations to UK citizens, the majority of whom did not wish to enter these conflicts in the first place. Most of the September 11th 2001 terrorists emanated from Saudi Arabia in any case, but we don't see much in the way of sanctions, diplomatic moves or invasion there do we?[697]

Observers condemned Al Qaeda and Bin Laden and lamented the prosecution of terrorism, but they also believed that Britain's enemies could not easily be identified, captured or targeted. Observers sometimes identified Bin Laden as a figurehead for Al Qaeda and thus, Britain's opponent in the Afghanistan War. Yet he was described as an elusive figure, more akin to an international criminal than an actor within the international system of states. His characterisation was indicative of the way in which observers thought about Britain's enemies in the Afghanistan War; their method of operation was unfamiliar and could not be connected directly to Britain's previous enemies or incorporated within a broader narrative of British identity rooted in resistance to dictatorship or fascism which prevailed among responses to previous directives.

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[696] MO G1416, female, born 1922.
[697] MO B4291, details not available.

Other observers were interested to explore exactly what motivated Al Qaeda and the Taliban. The answer was primarily religious fanaticism:

It is not surprising that the people in the most god-forsaken countries are believers in a wonderful eternal life. Their time on earth is so miserable and hopeless that they put their faith in the hereafter. Give them food, water, education, housing and medicines, but most of all hope, instead of paradise to come. Religion used to work here in the UK to keep people obedient and enslaved with promise of heaven if you were 'good'... Beliefs can enhance people's perceptions of the needs of the country but cannot become the goal of legislation and still allow freedom of thought and expression of those of different beliefs.[698]

I can see that religious fanaticism is very dangerous. History shows this from time immemorial. How serious Jihad is I don't know. I haven't what I would consider good information about Islam. I know the basics, but they are complicated by local circumstances and patriotism probably distorts the words of the Koran. (I believe, for instance, that women were not obliged by Muhammed to wear the Burka. There is a great deal of 'macho' pressure in some countries). I was appalled to see a woman saying goodbye to her son – shown on TV news – as he set off on a suicide mission in Israel. She appeared to give him her blessing. Do they really believe that Paradise will be the reward?[699]

Observers were not dismissive of the Afghanistan War and wanted to understand who British forces were fighting and why. They described an opponent motivated by religious fundamentalism and attempted to explain the source of this ideology. For some, religious fanaticism was linked to a stereotypical account of a primitive, backward – ironically, 'God-forsaken' – society in Afghanistan, while others took a more nuanced perspective in which religious ideology could not be separated easily from a range of factors exacerbating the expression of extremism or contemporary terrorism. What these

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[698] MO W632, female, born 1941.
[699] MO H2410, female, born 1929.

responses have in common however is an assessment of an enemy whose ideological or political motivation was difficult to fully comprehend or rationalise. This in itself is an important departure from what previous cohorts of observers wrote about Galtieri, Hussein and Milosevic. Those individuals were seen as brutal dictators; separate incarnations of a familiar fascistic or militaristic enemy, in many cases represented with clarity by persistent and direct comparison with popular memory of the 'evil' of Adolf Hitler. Neither the Taliban nor Al Qaeda was understood in this way. Observers conceived of an enemy in the Afghanistan War that was both elusive and lacked a state apparatus or military machine, but also one whose ideology was unfamiliar and unclear. The identification of an enemy motivated by an abstruse 'religious fanaticism' contributed to a difficulty in articulating Britain's role in the conflict more broadly and did not permit the reconstruction of a narrative of national identity anchored in Britain's legitimate entry into World War Two.

Further, Al Qaeda in particular differed from previous enemies in that they were thought to pose a persistent and direct threat to civilians living in Britain and Western countries and were not confined to far-off warzones:

There is depressing talk in the papers about Bin Laden being able to organise a 'dirty' bomb, uranium in a suitcase etc. which although nothing like as bad as a nuclear bomb would cause major disaster to smaller areas.[700]

I am… concerned about some idiot group getting hold of nuclear weaponry and nothing will protect us against blast and fallout… In a sense, I'm a little puzzled that there has been no terrorism aimed

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[700] MO W1918, female, born 1951.

at the UK given that Mr Blair has put us 100pc behind the US. I'd really rather parliament had had a

vote on our involvement but as were stuck with it, we must be a target.[701]

Save for preceding fears related to Weapons of Mass Destruction before the end of the Gulf War, observers writing about previous conflicts did not suggest that contemporary opponents represented a direct threat to Britain. For observers, the Afghanistan War, as part of a broader effort against terrorism and extremism, yielded a threat to British people that had little precedent in more recent conflicts.[702]

Further, for some observers this direct threat was conceived of not only as a threat to British people, but as a threat to British society or cultural norms. Some observers when attempting to make sense of the religious extremism represented by Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and the likelihood of terrorist attack, construed the war in Afghanistan with fears about extremists or minorities in Britain; "young British Muslims who have gone out to Pakistan… to join the Taliban",[703] or as another wrote after considering the effects of an intervention in Afghanistan:

We now have to be on alert when we go out and about locally, due to a big increase in 'car-jackings', muggings at knife point, and other crimes similar, which are mainly being carried out by Asian youths, around the Bradford area, against the white population, and since September 11th, this has increased.[704]

Observers often tied the war in Afghanistan to race and ethnicity within British society. This was not the case among responses submitted to previous directives. Enemies in the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo wars and the initial invasion of Iraq had been represented in

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[701] MO W633, female, born 1942.
[702] The extent to which the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq result in domestic or 'home-grown' terrorism is considered here: Kennedy-Piper and Vickers, "'Blowback' for Britain?"
[703] MO B2240, male, born 1921.
[704] MO W571, female, born 1937.

fundamentally similar ways, but also shared the quality of being far-away, removed from British society, and therefore distinctly other. This was not the case in Afghanistan where the prospect of terrorism and religious extremism was often connected to Britain's multicultural society and groups that were thought to pose a threat from within it. It was not characterised as a threat to the British nation, the international system or neighbouring states, but the British people and its domestic society. This could be read in another response in which Britain's war in Afghanistan prompted a misinformed conflation of domestic terrorism, asylum, immigration and welfare payments:

> The average British citizen only has to look at the way we deal with those who stir up race hatred to feel the government is not dealing with the rise of those who threaten this country and what it stands for. In fact our government with the aid of human rights rewards them with somewhere to live and benefits equivalent to £10,000 a year. The government also provides their families with accommodation which many who work their socks off in menial but worthwhile jobs would give their right hand to have and give people who are a threat to our country, our democracy and whole way of life, more to live on than those slaving away, sometimes at two jobs as my daughter has, are ever able to earn.[705]

For another observer, the repatriation of those killed in Afghanistan involved divisions along religious lines. Protests by 'a small Muslim group' further undermined a sense of homogeneity or unity within Britain. The Afghanistan War intruded on domestic politics. The military sacrifices made overseas by British soldiers meant it was possible for Muslims to 'come to' Britain, though of course exactly where the protestors were born was not considered:

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[705] MO M3408, female, born 1946.

More recently we have watched the seemingly steady flow of bodies of military casualties from the war in Afghanistan returning to RAF Brize Norton and the corteges passing through the town of Wootton Bassett with the townspeople lining the route. This started as a local impromptu affair but more and more people have joined this show of pride in and support for our armed forces. It was therefore all the more disagreeable to see the anti-military protest by a small Muslim group. They need to be reminded that it was the predominantly young soldiers, sailors and airmen who have made sure that they have been able to come to this country and be given the chance to make such a protest. I can accept that there are people who disagree with the war but a funeral is not the place to show it.[706]

I do not suggest here that observers were more inclined to prejudicial attitudes in the wake of the Afghanistan War than among previous cohorts, nor is it the case that such views are widespread among observers. However, discussions of race, culture, ethnicity, immigration or religion were not a feature of responses to previous directives in which state-led dictatorship, tyranny or fascism were considered to be the object of British force or part of contemporary crises. The above responses reveal how the specific circumstances of the Afghanistan War, and the interpretation of a terrorist, fanatic enemy, prompted a focus on and connection with Britain's domestic society that was unprecedented within collected responses.

While I am aware that there is voluminous and important scholarship dedicated to exploring the ways in which British identity interacts with race, ethnicity and culture in contemporary Britain,[707] I do not seek here to explore directly connections between these entities. Suffice it to say that, in the context of what observers wrote about Britain's recent wars specifically, race, ethnicity and religion came to occupy a more prominent position in what they wrote. This does not reflect any material changes in the make-up or

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[706] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[707] See, for a broader discussion of these debates: Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*; Parekh, "Defining British National Identity"; Parekh, "Being British".

nature of British society - something which I am not able to comment on within the context of this research – but that it does reflect a material change in the ways in which observers connected British identity to its recent military conflicts.

It is important to stress that not all observers were critical of ethnic minorities or immigrants, or viewed British Muslims as a potential fifth column. In other cases, observers lamented the apparent social disturbance resulting from Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan War and the 'War on Terror':

> A friend and I, shopping in Batley, West Yorkshire, are served by a Muslim girl, in traditional grey and black complete with head covering (but not a burqa) and with a local accent. Wonder how she feels. Daren't ask her. Here in the North-East, Sikhs at the local temple try to explain that it's not their fight, after some nasty incidents. How can people be so ignorant? And, up here, ignorant means not only not knowing something but being ill-mannered too.[708]

> I saw quite an interesting programme last week – Melvyn Bragg, two Muslims, one of them an advisor to the White House, one author and one journalist. The discussion was at quite a high level and informative, but again you could sense the frustrations of the Muslims – the debate was still very much run on WASP [White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant] assumptions.[709]

Again however, such responses show how the conflict in Afghanistan and the enemies confronted within it were connected to domestic society. Britain did not face another state, with a readily identifiable ideology or agenda. Contemporary terrorism offered a more elusive and fluid opponent, but also one that engendered discussion of religion or ethnicity within British society. Unlike previous conflicts, the enemy could not be

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[708] MO W633, female, born 1942.
[709] MO C2654, female, born 1942.

roundly condemned as far-off, other and alien, nor could they be understood any more clearly by invocations of fascism, Nazism, dictatorship or the person of Adolf Hitler.

As I have discussed within the introduction to this research, it is not possibly to know the precise religious or ethnic identities of observers. Yet the bias toward the white, English, southern middle class is an established feature of the archive. While the responses considered above reveal a range of views – certainly only a minority offered overtly prejudicial or racist assertions – it is evident that the contemporary context of the Afghanistan War elicited a discussion of British identity in which other layers of ethnic and religious identity were thought to be important. Whether through abuse, curiosity or criticism, observers wrote about Islam and British Muslims in a manner that was not apparent within responses to previous directives. They did not discuss fascism, dictatorship or state diplomacy because they were not relevant. It was thus difficult to narrate Britain's opposition or resistance to a definitive Other against which a sense of homogeneity or unity could be constructed. While the ethnic structure of British society had not radically altered between 1999 and 2001, the ways in which military conflicts were linked to domestic society did, due primarily to their perceived circumstances, and the manner in which they were understood as markers of national identity.

Here then is the particular significance of the Afghanistan War within the context of this research. The War on Terror offered a context in which popular memories of British resistance to fascism and Nazi Germany in World War Two retained little relevance. When confronted with Al Qaeda and the Taliban observers were not sure what exactly motivated them, or what exactly they wanted, beyond a diffuse and abstract assertion of 'religious fanaticism' or belief in an afterlife. In the absence of an organised, identifiable enemy, whose ideological and political perspectives could be clarified through historical precedent, observers frequently made more uncomfortable and

challenging connections with domestic society and politics. Thus the specific context of Afghanistan War left observers without a secure narrative of identity, reinforced by the articulation of celebrated and familiar popular memories. Lacking the re-invocation of a 'ubiquitous' Hitler,[710] the Afghanistan War represents a radical departure from previous cases because of the much different ways in which observers constructed British identity within it. It did not permit a retreat into a secure narrative of British identity which centred on a fundamentally moral distinction between British tolerance, moderation and democracy, and the evils of Nazi aggression, brutality and totalitarianism.[711]

Conclusions

Representations of Britain's war in Afghanistan differed from previous recent conflicts within collected responses. In fact, observers were generally less concerned about the Afghanistan War by comparison, describing it as a confusing, complex or peripheral engagement. This cannot be explained by material or political circumstance alone. In fact, as I explain above, the conflict was notable in the course of Britain's recent history because of its length and its significant material and human cost. Though the period immediately following the initial intervention may have elicited less media or political focus, the increasing prominence of the war from 2006, as it claimed more British lives, did not seem to alter its relative importance within responses, particularly when compared to the much greater salience attributed to the invasion of Iraq.

Instead, observers found it difficult to clarify Britain's involvement in the Afghanistan War by including it within a broader narrative of British identity. Most importantly here, and in sharpest contrast to responses concerning the other conflicts I

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[710] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271
[711] See: Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 196.

consider in this research, it is memories of Britain's Second World War that were absent. In order for the war in Afghanistan to be understood clearly it had to be interpreted coherently as a *British* experience; more than the sum total of the individuals deployed their or caught in its violence or politics. Without widespread referral to past events or conflicts which could offer a direct explanation in the present, the aims of British policy, the legitimacy of the conflict, and Britain's role within it could not be clarified by comparison, connection or contrast. It is not the *ways* in which popular memories of the past were reconstructed or re-invoked by observers which distinguishes the Afghanistan War among the cases selected, but that popular memories of past wars – most notably related to World War Two - were rarely invoked *at all*.

Of course, this again demonstrates the extent to which contemporary circumstance, memory and identity were intrinsically linked when observers considered the use of British military force, and that it was the particular circumstances of the Afghanistan War that explained the comparative absence of popular memories that had been apparent in responses concerning previous cases. During the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo conflicts (and the initial invasion of Iraq which is discussed in the next chapter), even among those who rejected the legitimacy of force, contemporary circumstances could be understood by referring to Britain's legitimate and celebrated part in resistance against Nazi Germany. In particular, aggression and abuse on the part of the state – be it Argentina, Iraq or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – could be understood by reference to the abuses of the Nazi regime. Contemporary dictators were pervasively characterised by similarity with Adolf Hitler; their motivations and ideologies were understood to be similar and thus, more obviously illegitimate. Likewise, these enemies could be considered totally 'other', constructed in binary opposition to a unified and singular British resistance. Questions remained only about where exactly the standard for using

military force should lie; did contemporary abuse or aggression merit the use of force? Was it congruent with Britain's history of resistance to dictators, tyrants or fascists? In Afghanistan, the circumstances of a conflict aimed at defeating terrorism rather than a specific aggression or political ideology, and defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda rather than a recognised regime or dictatorship, could not be explained any better by reference to World War Two or Nazi Germany, thus meaning observers more frequently characterised the conflict as complex, peripheral or a non-event. The circumstances of the War on Terror did not seem to engender the mobilisation of memories of Britain's Second World War in the same way that they did, for example, in the United States where popular memory of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour framed the destruction of the World Trade Center and thus offered a different perspective on the importance of the subsequent Afghan War.[712] For observers, perceptions of military legitimacy and Britain's historical identity were invested most heavily in an interpretation of the expansionist threat pose by Nazi Germany, and moral interpretation of the need to act in defence against such aggression. Neither seemed particularly relevant in relation to Operation Herrick.

From 2006, as the war in Afghanistan began to claim more British lives and engender a greater public focus, and the war in Iraq transitioned fully to a counter-insurgency operation, observers remained unable and unwilling to invoke a celebrated British past or identity rooted in its Second World War. Instead they saw the Afghanistan War as one embedded more heavily in culture, race and religion, rather than politics or ideology. On the one hand they were clearly uncomfortable and less involved with this interpretation; the war was unclear, complex and generated fewer specific responses. Yet on the other, it represented a particular departure from previous conflicts, with observers

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[712] Hoogland Noon, "Operation Enduring Analogy".

linking the warzone in Afghanistan to Britain's domestic society. They were unable to reconstruct a certain or morally assured narrative of identity by resurrecting a familiar interpretation of a hostile, dictatorial, aggressive Other. While it might be acceptable to suggest that the Afghanistan case is relatively less important within the context of this research because it generated less interest among observers, it is surely more accurate to point out that this weak interest is the result of a fundamental (context-driven) shift in the way in which observers related Britain's identity to contemporary conflict. Without widespread reference to Britain's Second World War, the later years of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts represented a fragmentation of familiar ideas of British identity in the minds of observers, and a departure from trends that could be seen across responses concerning other recent conflicts.

The Iraq War 2003-2009

Britain's involvement in the Iraq War began with the US-led invasion in March 2003 and ended with withdrawal from combat operations in April 2009.[713] Operation 'Telic' – the British codename for combat operations in Iraq – represented a significant deployment for the United Kingdom. Though committing a force just one tenth the size of the American contingent, Britain's contribution to the initial invasion numbered some 25,000 military personnel. After the removal of the Iraqi regime in 2003, British forces maintained a sizeable presence – between four and five thousand combat troops at any one time – in the Shia-dominated south, focused on Iraq's second city, Basra.[714]

Telic was a shorter campaign than Herrick – the British deployment to Afghanistan – and claimed fewer British lives; 179 in total.[715] However, the Iraq War is a notable case because of its controversial international and domestic context.[716] The diplomatic divisions the invasion generated, without UN resolution or international consensus, mirrored the contested public debate which developed within Britain.[717] The Iraqi regime was considered by Western intelligence agencies to be a specific security threat with a suspected stockpile of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and a history of their use on civilians. The British government took great effort to convince both the public in Britain and an international audience that the threat required armed intervention,

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[713] For a journalistic account of Britain's Iraq War, see: Fairweather, *A War of Choice*.

[714] US and UK forces were joined by contingents from Australia, New Zealand and Poland. Their contributions however were far smaller, numbering only in the few thousands. Figures for the American and British contributions are freely available. See, BBC News, "Iraq War in Figures", 2011. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11107739 (Accessed 07-11-2017).

[715] BBC News, "UK Military Deaths in Iraq".

[716] Keohane, "The United Kingdom".

[717] Bluth, "The British road to war"; Kennedy-Piper and Vickers, "'Blowback' for Britain?"; Towle, *Going to War*, 142-155.

and was at pains to pursue a war with Iraq through multilateral means. The Blair government ultimately achieved neither of those aims.[718]

The Iraq War has left a potent legacy within the domestic politics in Britain. Subsequent military interventions in Syria and Iraq have been conducted under 'the shadow of Iraq';[719] a euphemism for a pervasive fear that the use of military force overseas would result in the same level of political controversy and operational difficulties as had been encountered from 2003. Indeed, it is a dynamic widely considered to have affected David Cameron's decision to put intervention in Syria before parliament in a binding vote in 2013.[720] Similarly, it is a matter of journalistic routine to ascribe the legacy of the Iraq War a prominent place within British party politics and leadership elections, particularly within the Labour Party.[721] This fraught domestic context is perhaps surprising, given the shorter duration and lesser cost in lives the Iraq campaign accounted for when compared to the contemporaneous deployment in Afghanistan. Observers' responses show, at a micro-level and in individual detail, how the Iraq War generated a much more potent political and social legacy because of the ways in which the conflict related to broader interpretations and understandings of Britain's identity.

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[718] Steven P. Kramer, "Blair's Britain after Iraq", *Foreign Affairs*. 82, no. 4 (2003): 90-104; Paul Hoggett, "Iraq: Blair's Mission Impossible", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 7, no. 2 (2005): 418-428; Keohane, "The United Kingdom"; John Strawson, "Britain's democratic vision for Iraq: Strategic Interest or Contingency?", *International Journal of Contemporary Iraq Studies*. 2, no. 3 (2008): 352-373; Ralph, "After Cilcot"; Steven Kettell, "Dilemmas of Discourse: Legitimising Britain's War on Terror", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. 15, no. 2 (2013): 263-279.
On public support for the Iraq War in Britain see: Clements, "Examining Public Attitudes"; Clements, "Public Opinion"; Gribble, *et a*l. "British Public Opinion".
[719] See, for example: *The Economist*, "In Iraq's Shadow", 2015. Online, available at: https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21679441-they-spent-11-hours-grappling-past-conflicts-and-present-realities-middle-east-mps (accessed 24-01-2018).
[720] BBC News, "Syria Crisis: Cameron loses commons vote on Syria", 2013. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-23892783 (Accessed 06-11-2017).
[721] See: Ewen MacAskill, "Jeremy Corbyn to apologise for Iraq War", *The Guardian*, 2015. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/aug/20/jeremy-corbyn-apologise-iraq-war-behalf-labour-leader (Accessed 07-11-2017); Ben Quinn, "Labour can never be led by an Iraq War supporter, Corbyn rally told", *The Guardian*, 2016. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/06/labour-iraq-war-leader-corbyn-trickett-momentum-rally (Accessed 06-11-2017); James Naughtie, "How Tony Blair came to be so unpopular", *BBC News*, 2016. Online, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36746453 (Accessed 06-11-2017).

Observers were concerned less with the technicalities of government policy or military operations, and more with clarifying what British involvement in the invasion of Iraq revealed about Britain itself, and how it related to what observers knew about Britain's history and past experience of war.

I draw on a sample of 102 observers in this chapter. This figure is much higher than those considered in previous chapters. This is due largely to the more detailed and lengthier content of their responses, my ambition to achieve 'saturation' across a wide range of views,[722] and the fact that the conflict lasted long enough to be included within multiple directives.[723] I have not tracked the responses of a single group of observers through the 2002, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2014 directives as most individuals only wrote responses to one or two. Instead I have drawn on a greater overall number of observers in order to capture perspectives across time. Furthermore, while I have included responses from nineteen observers from the generic 'Issues in the News' directives in 2005, 2009 and 2014, the vast majority of observers considered in this chapter were writing in response to four separate directives: the two directives issued in the summer and autumn of 2002 which asked for observers' views on "Iraq and US Foreign Policy" and "the possibility of war with Iraq" respectively; the Spring 2003 directive which included a sub-directive dedicated to "War with Iraq" asking observers to "note down your reactions and your opinions as and when you feel you can"; and the Summer 2008 directive which included a sub-directive titled "War: experiences and reflections" and asked observers to comment on what they knew about war, how they found out about it, if they had experienced it, if they supported military charities, what they thought about

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[722] For an overview, see; Ritchie, *et al. Qualitative Research*, 77-108. See also: Colley, "Is Britain a force for good?", 6.

[723] The topics and subjects which these directives covered by asking observers to record in their responses can be seen in Appendix II.

protests and how they engaged in commemoration and remembrance.[724] The 2008 directive also asked observers to "consider any historic conflicts you feel are relevant". They responded by referring to a variety of cases, including most considered in this research, though they remained concerned primarily with the controversial invasion of Iraq which was seemingly still fresh in their minds. Consideration of responses from all of these directives meant that, in addition to giving a broad range of views from observers, reactions to the Iraq War could be analysed at all points from build-up in 2002, to invasion in 2003, and withdrawal in 2009; an important requirement when considering the manner in which changing circumstances in Iraq affected how observers related it to narratives and ideas of British identity.

Most who wrote about the Iraq War were, even among those submitting to the earliest directives in 2002, not yet born during the 1930s and 1940s,[725] or at least, could not draw on lived experience of that era. Yet responses concerning the initial invasion of Iraq contrast those concerning the Afghanistan War because of the clarity with which observers narrated Britain's involvement, and the manner in which this clarity was assured by persistent invocation of popular memories of Britain's Second World War. Observers were once again concerned with the legitimacy of the war, its military outcomes, the status of soldiers, domestic leadership and the international situation and other states. They were however, highly critical of Britain's contribution to the invasion. They invoked Britain's resistance to Nazi Germany most often as part of a contrast in which the present use of military force could be explained as both unjustified, but also a departure or deviation from a broader, morally secure narrative of historical British identity. Only after the initial invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime,

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[724] See Appendix II for directive sheets.
[725] The mean year of birth within the sample was 1945.

when popular memory of Britain's Second World War ceased to offer any particular explanatory power over the present, did these connections fragment.

Legitimacy

Similarly to responses concerning all the conflicts I consider in this research, observers who wrote about the Iraq War were concerned about its legitimacy and whether Britain was justifiably using military force. Unlike those immediately previous however, notably the initial intervention in Afghanistan and Britain's involvement in the Kosovo War, observers were clear about the Iraq invasion. The vast majority were highly critical of Britain's participation in the US-led invasion and, though based on a variety of reasons, offered definitive conclusions. Few were supportive or, importantly, equivocal about the legitimacy of the military campaign.

Indeed, of the 102 observers whose responses I have considered in this chapter, just eleven did not articulate a specific conclusion on whether the war was justified or not. Typical examples were marked by an explicit and intense difficulty in reconciling arguments for the use of force and those against:

…should we stand up for justice for all? I want peace but are we prepared to stand back and wash our hands? I wish that there were more facts to go on but at some point there have to be people like presidents and prime ministers to make judgements.[726]

This is a difficult one. I don't know what I think about the war. I wish it had not happened but – I did not take part in the anti-war demonstration on 15th February, because I am not certain enough to take any such action... I find it a bit irritating when people assume that of course I am opposed to the

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[726] MO L2281, female, born 1933.

war. I am afraid we have got ourselves in a corner there from which it is going to be difficult to get out with any credibility.[727]

Accounts like these, in which observers explained how they could not decide whether Britain should be using military force or not, were relatively common in regard to the contemporaneous war in Afghanistan. In relation to Iraq, they represented a very small number of collected responses. Those who did narrate the legitimacy of the invasion in this way were writing primarily during the crisis period before the invasion, or during the initial military operations. Few observers remained unsure as the military situation in Iraq appeared to worsen.

Likewise, very few observers, as a proportion of those writing, believed that the conflict was fully justified and that it was right for Britain to use military force against Iraq. Twelve observers were supportive, though the ways in which they explained their views varied. Some, writing in 2002, clearly felt that the threat posed by Iraq's alleged WMD programme was sufficient justification to use military force.[728] They wrote that "Saddam Hussein is dangerous and determined to use his frightening arsenal of weapons"[729] and that "He has an array of scientists who have been conducting experiments with chemical and biological weapons".[730] Another observer wrote a response typical of the minority who supported the invasion before March 2003:

I think this has much to do with the fact that I feel my own feelings are probably out of touch with what the media has persuaded me and the rest of the British public believe. I have never wanted to see British soldiers fighting in Iraq or anywhere else in the Middle East. However I do feel, and have

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[727] MO B1665, female, born 1934.

[728] This was the case made by both the US and UK governments in 2002 and 2003. Alan Doig and Mark Pythian, "The National Interest and the Politics of Threat Exaggeration: The Blair Government's Case for War against Iraq", *The Political Quarterly*. 76, no. 3 (2005): 368-376; Holland, "Blair's War on Terror"; Strong, "More spinn'd", 110-146.

[729] MO C1713, female, born 1934.

[730] MO C1713, female, born 1934.

always felt, that Saddam Hussein's regime is a threat to peace, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world generally. He has had twelve years in which to disarm and stop producing and acquiring chemical weapons.[731]

However, as the invasion turned into occupation, and the limited extent of Iraq's WMD threat became apparent, observers were naturally less likely to suggest that destroying Iraq's unconventional weapons justified the use of military force. However, some continued to emphasise the legitimacy of removing the Hussein regime on humanitarian grounds:

I agreed we should go to war with Iraq and found the BBC news reporting so irritating I started watching ITV News. I feel very sorry for the soldiers trying to cope with a people who have been treated as though it was the middle ages by their own leader. It will take a long time to get things straight. I hope Saddam Hussein is found.[732]

I would love to be anti-war but not going into Iraq would have condemned vast numbers to more violence... I believe in intervention and do not go along with the concept of an inviolate nation state.[733]

Like responses to previous conflicts, a minority of observers were clearly swayed most heavily by the possibility of humanitarian intervention, and characterised the Iraq War as a legitimate effort to liberate the Iraqi people and address their suffering under the Hussein regime. Another observer characterised the conflict against Iraq as one reminiscent of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Though very few observers were supportive of Britain's participation, the response is indicative of the extent to which popular

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[731] MO S2581, female, born 1951.
[732] MO C2078, female, born 1944.
[733] MO H3821, male, born 1952.

memories of Britain's involvement in the Second World War were thought to retain a particular relevance. Perspectives on the legitimacy of the contemporary conflict could be clarified by direct connection to a morally clear and assured use of military force in the past:

> It is like Hitler and the Nazis all over again. In that instance we and other countries held back till it was nearly too late. Only terrible loss of life stopped him. Saddam Hussein is the master of cunning and double talk. He's got many of the Arab states on his side.[734]

When compared to the contemporaneous war in Afghanistan, observers were far more likely to draw on popular memories of previous conflicts, including entry into the Second World War, and a specific narrative in which appeasement was again reconstructed as a failure to deal with a dangerous enemy soon enough.

Some who supported the Iraq invasion drew on British involvement in the preceding Gulf War and suggested that, having failed to remove Hussein from power in 1991, the current Iraq War represented a legitimate corrective:

> In my view it was ten years too late. George Bush senior allowed himself to be hamstrung by the Arab involvement when Iraq was removed from Kuwait. A vast swathe of the Shia population was misled by the US into thinking that an uprising against Saddam would be assisted. It is no wonder that there is now an anti-American feeling in many parts of the country.[735]

> Our biggest mistake was not dealing with him properly at the end of the first Gulf war when the opportunity presented itself. However that is now in the past and it seems to me, that he has to be stopped now. It is no good bemoaning the fact that we had our chance 12 years ago. There is nothing

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[734] MO C1713, female, born 1948.
[735] MO R470, male, born 1934.

we can do to change the situation of 12 years ago, but we can try and stop his regime now. He has killed up to 2 million of his own people, so would not hesitate to kill other people.[736]

Evidently, observers who supported the Iraq War based their opinions on a wide range of interpretations and factors; they did not simply accept the official case based on the existence of Iraqi WMD. Indeed, a striking feature of these responses, aside from their being only a fraction of an overwhelmingly critical sample, is the fact that the American and British governments' case for war informed so few responses, despite the widespread subsequent belief that the controversy surrounding the Iraq War – at least in Britain – was a product of its prosecution "on a false prospectus."[737]

Indeed, the 'false prospectus' argument assumes that support for the Iraq War hinged on a perception of political failure; that those who supported a war to disarm Iraq were subsequently disenchanted when the true extent of Iraq's WMD became known. For observers however, it is important to note that the threat posed by Iraq's possible WMD programme was frequently dismissed as a justification for war *before* the conflict took place:

I'm sure the Iraqi regime is dangerous for its own people and they may well have weapons of mass destruction but I don't think anyone has provided enough proof of these weapons… and we seem unwilling to give the weapons inspectors the extra time they want.[738]

For another, even if Iraq did possess Weapons of Mass Destruction it would not necessarily justify a military conflict to disarm the Hussein regime:

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[736] MO S2581, female, born 1951.
[737] Bluth, "The British road to war", 871.
[738] MO A2801, female, born 1965.

> If Iraq is supposed to have these weapons of mass destruction and have been building them up for 12 years, I fear they would have used them by now. What about America? They certainly have Weapons of Mass Destruction, can we all demand to have inspectors there? And make them disarm! I don't think so.[739]

Observers writing before the conflict were as likely to be sceptical about official claims, or the existence of Iraqi WMD, as a justification for war as they were to support it. In fact, so many observers were unequivocally critical of Britain's participation in the invasion of Iraq – eighty-one – that those who supported it, on whatever grounds, were necessarily always in a minority. The vast majority of observers did not support the war and, crucially, most had decided that they were against it *before* it began in March 2003.

Why exactly were observers so against British participation in the invasion of Iraq? Evidently, observers objected for a variety of reasons. Much of what they wrote in this regard had precedent within responses to previous directives. Once again, observers were often worried that the use of force in Iraq would be needlessly destructive, despite the abhorrent nature of Hussein's regime, and could not be justified while peaceful or diplomatic options remained available to modify his actions or behaviour. Writing during the crisis period in 2002, some observers stressed that "[a] lot of people live in [Iraq] and they have a difficult enough time already [without war]"[740] and that "[t]he Americans and the British or anyone else have no right to invade Iraq, and cause yet more bloodshed and suffering to the Iraqis".[741] Another wrote similarly:

> A war with Iraq will spark off terrible unrest in the Middle East and almost certainly will cause great suffering to those people already living under the most appalling conditions. The Iraqi people are currently starving and oppressed and the world health organisation predicts that a war could kill

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[739] MO C1939, female, born 1939.
[740] MO B1771, female, born 1931.
[741] MO A883, male, born 1933.

upwards of five million people – either through the direct bombing, or through starvation and disease in the aftermath.[742]

As the campaign began, observers who objected to the war on these grounds felt vindicated as the destructive power unleashed by the US-led forces was revealed:

> As expected, this war caused the death and injuries of thousands of innocent civilians in Iraq as well as many casualties among the US and UK troops.[743]

> I find that I lie awake at night, unable to dismiss from my mind the picture of the little boy with both arms blown off and his whole family killed. The fact that the war seems to be nearly over, that Iraq has been 'conquered', is no compensation for the terrible devastation, the loss of life, the destruction of priceless buildings and of people's homes, the uncontrolled looting and the starvation.[744]

Like those who had written about previous conflicts, a small number of observers believed that the use of force undermined any possibility of humanitarianism. They were often highly critical of the Iraqi regime, but believed that the contingencies and nature of armed conflict precluded its use while for a humanitarian purpose.

Other observers were concerned more specifically with the politics and diplomacy of the Iraq invasion. For them the nature of modern warfare was not a central feature of responses. Instead, the legitimacy of the conflict had to be understood within the specific circumstance of the Iraq crisis. As in the previous Gulf conflict, this was manifested within many responses as a suspicion that Western, namely American, interests in

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[742] MO B2978, female, born 1969.
[743] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[744] MO P2546, female, born 1925.

securing oil reserves were really driving the move to war.[745] Observers wrote variously that the invasion seemed "more to do with oil and command of the Arab states",[746] that "It is surely about oil"[747] or that "I do not know a single person who believes that this war is about anything other than American foreign policy and oil."[748] After the initial invasion one observer described the war as an acquisition by powerful American interests:

> The oil companies want cheap oil. The contracts for rebuilding Iraq are to be awarded mainly to American companies. One company associated with the vice president is rumoured to be doing quite well out of the arrangement. It would not surprise me to learn that McDonalds have the contract for feeding the troops and Disney has signed up for the film rights.[749]

Though the Iraq crisis and war represented a new and much different set of circumstances, some observers evidently focused their discussions of legitimacy on ideas that had been articulated by observers writing responses to previous directives. The destructive potential of modern war and the possibility of ulterior, largely American, interest in securing oil resources were both aspects that featured among responses concerned with the Gulf and Kosovo wars. Once more in Iraq, some observers felt that it was wrong for Britain to pursue war when it appeared to be unwarranted or needless, and driven so heavily by the United States.

However, the other conflicts which elicited similar objections to those above had not been criticised as frequently or as intensely. Britain had been involved in similarly

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[745] Oil security was certainly an aspect American and British strategy regarding Iraq and the wider Middle East both during the pre-invasion period and over the longer term. See: Doug Stokes, "The War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq", *Globalizations*. 6, no. 1 (2009): 107-112; Stephen Zunes, "The US Invasion of Iraq: The Military Side of Globalization", *Globalizations*. 6, no. 1 (2009): 99-105.
For a consideration of the Iraq War within American political economy and its wide regional disposition in the Middle East, see: Vassilis Fouskas and Bulent Gokay, *The New American Imperialism* (Wesport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005), 179-192.
[746] MO C1939, female, born 1939.
[747] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[748] MO B2978, female, born 1969.
[749] MO W2174, male, born 1944.

destructive, US-led campaigns previously, yet none of them were as roundly condemned or unpopular as the Iraq War among observers. Indeed, the latter represents an anomaly among collected responses because of the far more decisive and unambiguous rejection of its legitimacy by the vast majority of observers.

I suggest here that concerns about WMD, the outcome of force or oil security were subordinate to a broader discourse in which the conflict was considered more fundamentally to be *aggressive*. Observers were united in their belief that the Iraq invasion was wrong because they were more confident in constructing narratives of British identity within it. They were, from its inception, overwhelmingly uncomfortable with the possibility of a pre-emptive assault, and it was this that set their collected responses apart from more supportive or ambiguous reactions to previous conflicts. Typical accounts were offered by observers who wrote that "People may not like his regime, but who are we to set ourselves up as God? At present, Iraq seems to be reasonably 'contained'",[750] that "to make war on Iraq at this point would be an act of the grossest folly – a criminal act one could say if one was outspoken"[751] and "Since when have we started invading countries or talking of changing their regimes just because we don't agree with them?"[752]

During the previous Kosovo conflict many observers found it difficult to reconcile a desire to react to the violence occurring in the region with a belief that Operation Allied Force represented unwarranted interference in a state which had not threatened Britain, its allies, or neighbouring states directly. In 2002 and 2003 observers were generally more concerned that the United States and Britain were themselves threatening the *status quo*. One observer asked, "WHY DON'T WE AS BRITS KEEP OUR NOSE OUT OF OTHER PEOPLES' PROBLEMS, WE ALWAYS SEEM TO COME OUT IN THE END

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[750] MO C2654, female, born 1942.
[751] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[752] MO G1041, female, born 1925.

AS 'PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE'"[753] while another wrote after the initial invasion "I still don't condone this war, in fact, I am very much against it... we weren't provoked, we were, in essence, interfering in another country's regime."[754]

Indeed, similar ideas continued to be articulated by observers writing in the years following the overthrow of the Iraqi regime. The invasion was remembered clearly as an unwarranted and unjustified use of military force. Two accounts written in 2008 were typical:

> I opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Saddam Hussein was an evil man, but he did not, contrary to what we were told by Blair and Bush, constitute a regional or global threat… Along with one million people I marched through London to oppose the 2003 invasion of Iraq.[755]

> We should never have entered a war that does not concern us, especially now that Iraq is in a worse state now we have butted in than it was when Saddam was their leader.[756]

The military outcome of conflict was of course an important aspect of responses (returned to shortly). Yet it is important to state once again that most observers believed war against Iraq to be illegitimate because it was unprovoked and aggressive *regardless* of the military outcome. For this latter observer the war had been one which did not 'concern' Britain; the perception of military and political deterioration in the intervening years simply compounded a pre-existing assessment.

Observers frequently concluded that war against Iraq in 2003 was not justified by invoking familiar narratives of British experience in previous conflicts:

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[753] MO T2741, male, born 1921.
[754] MO F2949, female, born 1954.
[755] MO C2256, male, born 1949.
[756] MO M3147, female, born 1960.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, and the US fought them, that was just, and at the time I thought they should have continued until they had killed Saddam, and the situation was resolved. They had cause then, but not now.[757]

Do they [Iraqis] all want to be liberated? I remember the Argentinians thought they were liberating the Falklands – I just hope we are not as misled.[758]

I think we [the observer and his family members] all agreed there was a difference between a necessary war (such as going to the defence of the Falklands Islanders when the Argentinians invaded, or going to the aid of Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion) and war [in Iraq] which had no clear aim.[759]

Both the Falklands and Gulf wars were alluded to as examples in which the use of force had been legitimate and, importantly, predicated on a defence against aggression. Again, these responses show the extent to which invocation of the past helped observers to make sense of the present, lending weight to their conclusions on the legitimacy of the current campaign. In both the Kosovo and Afghanistan wars observers had often found it difficult to align a range of concerns, or make specific comparison with previous conflicts. The specific context of the Iraq War, conceived as a pre-emptive and unprovoked assault, meant observers turned to narratives of past conflicts which retained an explanatory power by putative contrast.

Importantly however, observers invoked memories of Britain's entry into the Second World War as a benchmark for legitimacy, demonstrating how far short involvement in the Iraq War fell by comparison. In one instance, an elderly observer drew on lived experience – a rare occurrence among responses written after 2002 - during

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[757] MO H2911, female, born 1964.
[758] MO B2154, female, born 1933.
[759] MO D4101, male, born 1960.

World War Two to accentuate the seriousness of the contemporary situation regarding Iraq:

> A friend of mine from those days – a pilot with the RAF – tells me that were he in the Service today and was ordered to bomb 'selected' targets in Iraq he would refuse and accept the consequences. One never heard of such talk during the Second World War when we were united against the enemy who, after all, was the foul aggressor and may well have invaded us but for the battle of Britain.[760]

Most observers were, at this point, not old enough to remember the Second World War personally. Yet the controversial nature of the crisis and conflict with Iraq prompted observers to draw widely on popular memories of World War Two, and to clarify their conclusions on the legitimacy of the Iraq War by contrast. Observers commented on how the contemporary circumstance was "so different from defending your own country against invasion"[761] and that "I know we eventually stopped Hitler but he was the actual aggressor all over Europe. But Iraq had not invaded anybody."[762] Another wrote a lengthier narrative in which the standards of legitimacy in Britain's modern conflicts had collapsed:

> I am not against all military interventions. I have just been reading about the pacifists in the Second World War and, while I understand their principles, I think that was a war we had to fight. There are times when our troops are sent in to stop persecution and I think that is ok (e.g. Kosovo) but I think the current events in Iraq and Afghanistan will make us more enemies and lead to more attacks on the West, not less, especially because we are so tied to the Americans who are so ignorant of the outside world and arrogant about imposing their own values on other countries.[763]

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[760] MO S2246, male, born 1923.
[761] MO Y2498, female, born 1912.
[762] MO C2570, female, born 1921.
[763] MO P3213, female, born 1966.

Though generally lacking personal, lived experience, popular memories of Britain's road to World War Two were invoked to help clarify what observers wrote about a military conflict with Iraq, most frequently reinforcing a perception that Britain did not face an 'aggressor' as it had done in the 1930s and 1940s. Popular memories of appeasement and resistance against Nazi Germany transcended generations, but had been prompted by the specific circumstances of the Iraq crisis; "My son says we are appeasing Saddam as we tried to appease Hitler, but I think we are more like Hitler."[764]

The Iraq War stands out among collected responses to Britain's recent conflicts because of the frequency and intensity with which observers objected to it. Within responses written in 2002 and 2003, both immediately before and during the initial invasion, observers described a conflict that was unambiguously wrong. Their accounts reveal the extent to which the 'false prospectus'[765] argument – that the invasion became unpopular *after* the lack of an Iraqi WMD arsenal became apparent - was a weak determinant of their conclusions on legitimacy. They were not swayed retrospectively by the apparent weakness of the 'official' case for war. Instead, they understood the conflict more broadly as one which was *offensive*. Their interpretations of its legitimacy were – as in all conflicts – linked intimately to what observers thought it revealed about Britain as its prosecutor, and were clarified by comparison with popular memories which were thought to be relevant. Indeed, observers were most confident about describing the invasion of Iraq as an unjustified use of force when they interpreted it as one which was incongruent with the legitimacy of British resistance to German aggression and expansionism. They persistently constructed a narrative of identity in the Iraq War the contours of which were defined by contrast with specific understandings of the past, and a broader interpretation based on what the invasion reflected about Britain.

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[764] MO G1041, female, born 1925.
[765] Bluth, "The British road to war", 871.

Thus the Iraq War offers an important case within the context of this research, revealing once again the importance of popular memories of Britain's *entry* into the Second World War[766] - increasingly further from lived experience – in acting as a benchmark for legitimacy in more recent conflicts. Yet the circumstances of the present determined the ways in which observers remembered the past, and thus reconstructed narratives of British identity in the Second World War. Observers were most concerned to identify exactly *why* Britain was fighting another military conflict in the present, thus leading them to focus on exactly *why* Britain had fought wars in the past. In doing so they recreated a narrative of British involvement in World War Two that was fundamentally moral, referring to a specific understanding based on resistance to the 'evil' of Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion and militaristic brutality. In 2002 and 2003, as in responses submitted to the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo directives, observers discussions of legitimacy not only meant that popular memories of British involvement in the Second World War were re-invoked and sustained, but also that they were refashioned into a moral guide. Observers were less inclined to consider combat, fighting, sacrifice or domestic and social re-ordering that occurred during the war. They were instead inclined to consider more narrowly why it had been right for Britain to fight in the first place, reconstructing Britain's policy of appeasement in the 1930s as a mistake and a failure to deal with aggression soon enough.[767] This helps to explain why these fundamentally *popular* memories of British entry into the Second World War remained so frequently invoked among responses as those with lived experience of the war – be it the violence of combat or domestic transformations associated with the Home Front – dwindled as a proportion of those writing.

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[766] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 188-217.
[767] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 188-217; Connelly, *We Can Take It!,* 269-271.

Further, responses concerning the Iraq War show how the use of military force in highly controversial or discomfiting circumstances could be articulated as part of a broader history within which they seemed to be incongruent. The maintenance of a moral discussion of British involvement in the Second World War did not need to be associated directly with a contemporary conflict, but could be sustained as part of an explicit contrast. Far from undermining a belief in the legitimacy of British force or its identity as a force for good, observers were again engaged in reconstructing a specific interpretation of 'good war' against which failure in Iraq could be more clearly represented. Where involvement in the Afghanistan War offered a case in which such narratives of identity were not articulated, the initial invasion of Iraq prompted their reconstruction and reinforcement because as they retained a utility in helping to explain the present.

In 2002 and 2003 observers engaged once again in a much more fundamental reconstruction of British identity that was not confined solely to its role in the contemporary military conflict. Only as initial, controversial conditions transformed – and the war moved into its counter-insurgency and occupation phase – did popular memories of British involvement in the Second World War cease to be relevant, and this broader narrative of identity, in which the absolute legitimacy of the Second World War was a crucible, fragment. The initial invasion at least offered a brief period in which those memories retained a power to help explain the present and were thus re-invoked and reinforced.

The Military, Invasion, Combat and Occupation

Observers wrote about combat and the military at all stages of the Iraq War.[768] The initial invasion was a short and decisive affair in which American and British forces defeated an inferior Iraqi military, much weakened by years of economic sanctions and embargo, just as comprehensively as in the previous Gulf War in 1990/1991. The invasion was, in John Keegan's words, "mysterious in almost every aspect… Against the advance of an invading force only half its size, the Iraqi army faded away."[769] Likewise the 'shock and awe' campaign undertaken by US-led forces was similar in nature to previous operations involving massive air power in the Persian Gulf, Kosovo and Afghanistan. However, the occupation of Iraq after the 'de-Baathification' of the state and the dissolution of its army rapidly transformed into a drawn-out counter-insurgency, marked by sectarian violence between Iraq's various ethnic and religious communities.[770] What observers wrote about serving military personnel, and returning dead, was figured heavily by the circumstances of the war and crucially, perceptions of its legitimacy. A narrative of soldierly victimhood was particular pronounced as observers frequently attempted to reconcile their admiration for military service with a pervasive belief that the invasion had been unjustified.

During the initial campaign, observers wrote frequently of their fears that the war would be destructive for both British forces and Iraqi civilians. In only one response did an observer praise the "impressive" bombing which could "pinpoint such small targets."[771] Most observers were more critical and articulated familiar ideas of inhumane, indiscriminate and ineffective air power. They wrote about how US and British bombing

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[768] British combat operations began in March 2009 and ended in April 2009, though support and military training personnel remain, and since 2014 the Royal Air Force has carried out combat missions in Iraq as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the US-led intervention against ISIS.

[769] John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (London: Hutchinson, 2004), 2.

[770] Fawcett, "The Iraq War".

[771] MO P1796, female, born 1946.

had managed to "paralyse the Iraqi command [but] destroyed a lot else besides"[772] and had produced "showers of sparks rising up to the heavens from black smoking devastation… but to what effect we haven't been told."[773] Another observer wrote a similarly typical account:

> I feel that on the whole all means of peaceful improvement should be tried and I do not like the idea of bombing these places [in Iraq] as in Afghanistan, bombs have a habit of falling on the wrong places even in these sophisticated times and their remains cause troubles for years.[774]

Like some who had written about Operation Allied Force in 1999, the opening of the Iraq War prompted recollection of Britain's Blitz:

> Now the bombing has started I feel almost sick with despair… Reminds me of the bombing in London… The TV pictures of the bombing of Baghdad were horrific, I can't help thinking a lot of the people there will be killed.[775]

> We've seen the bombing of Iraq as it happens and how far away it all looks. Any sympathy I have for the people is overtaken by the thought that my parents and millions of others suffered five years of bomb attacks during WWII. No war can possibly go on for so long these days surely.[776]

The latter response in particular shows how the accuracy of historical information can be lost as observers re-invoked popular memories in order to ascribe meaning in the present.

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[772] MO W2117, male, born 1924.
[773] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[774] MO C2570, female, born 1921.
[775] MO B2154, female, born 1933.
[776] MO D1602, male, born 1942.

Britain's Blitz did not last five years[777] yet it was referred to confidently as a guide to action in the present,[778] framing the destructive power unleashed on innocent civilians.

The initial phase of 'shock and awe' was rapidly replaced by the occupation of Iraq. Initially some observers were enthusiastic about Britain's frontline military personnel. Even among observers who were unsure of the legitimacy of Britain's use of force in 2003, the possibility of ground combat focused attention on the heroism of the soldiers prosecuting it:

> In the event as soon as this undeclared war actually started the whole nation swung behind our heroic armed forces and opposition was muted... we must praise the skill, determination and courage of the allied forces which braved a very dangerous situation.[779]

> The British it has to be said are coping well and they are a credit to their country. It is said that the troops have had so much experience in policing Northern Ireland that Iraq has come naturally to them. They have gone about their duties being firm but fair and befriending the people and it has paid off.[780]

Occupation and counter-insurgency led some observers to suggest that British soldiers had unique experience in Northern Ireland, making them more amenable to the local population.[781] British troops were professional, humane and charitable:

> Their [British forces'] Northern Ireland experiences mean they have a much more relaxed attitude when dealing with the Iraqi people, they talk to them not at them, they smile, shake hands, whereas

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[777] Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 1-2.
[778] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 2.
[779] MO W2117, male, born 1924.
[780] MO F1634, female, born 1943.
[781] For a consideration of this reputation, and a counter-argument, see: David French, "Nasty not nice: British counter-insurgency doctrine and practice, 1945-1967", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. 23, no. 4 (2012): 744-761.

the American troops grip their guns, shout and are alternately either all jumpiness or swagger. The English when they speak to the camera are calm and measured, the Americans loud and boastful… all I can say is, that when this is all over, any positive outcome will be in no small measure to the credit of the English contingent who seem to go in after where the Americans have been and smooth everyone down.[782]

Again, the military occupation of Iraq was an opportunity for some observers to contrast British personnel with American counterparts. The description of swaggering, loud and boastful American soldiers further revealed a broad anti-American sentiment that was articulated by many observers. Britain by contrast, as embodied by its frontline troops, represented a more thoughtful and compassionate actor throughout.

Despite the particularly controversial nature of the war, most observers remained supportive of Britain's military personnel. Yet for some the specific circumstances of the Iraq invasion prompted them to question whether it was appropriate to support Britain's forces given that they were volunteer professionals:

With a professional army, well paid and, as they should be, well looked-after and compensated, I feel the forces do not now have the same relation to the nation at large as a conscript army which hasn't chosen to be exposed to danger and death, but which may well be more patriotic and closer to civil population when it comes to a just war… I'm uncomfortable and uncertain when politicians mouth platitudes about courage and fighting for one's country. Is this cynical? I'm not sure that politicians' platitudes (rather than attraction of job security, good pay, travel, excitement and conditions) are uppermost in professional soldiers' minds, although they're certainly brave.[783]

This observer interpreted the status of Britain's contemporary forces by alluding to past conscription. The connection, without directly referring to a specific deployment or war,

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[782] MO P2819, female, born 1964.
[783] MO W3393, male, born 1932.

reveals a set of assumptions in which mobilised conscripts were thought to embody an existential, more legitimate threat to Britain. They were more representative of the nation itself; 'closer' to the population at large. These ideas helped explain Britain's involvement in an illegitimate war in the present, through its use of professional forces – enticed by material benefits of 'job security, good pay, travel' – but also contributed to a narrative that, through the mass mobilisation of the population, Britain had been unified in facing legitimate threats in the past. Though there is no explicit mention of the Second World War here it is evident that ideas of 'people's war' were important in informing interpretations of the legitimacy of using force itself.[784]

In fact, as the occupation of Iraq became increasingly fraught for both American and British forces, particularly after the eruption of sectarian violence in 2006, other observers found it difficult to find anything heroic in contemporary military service. For one, the tactics deployed by occupying British forces seemed to mirror the illegitimacy of the war itself:

> I've been disturbed too by scenes of British troops removing pictures of Saddam Hussein from the walls of public places and bulldozing statues. How would we like that sort of thing to happen here if we were ever invaded? And the millions of pounds that have gone up in smoke in the form of tanks and helicopters and even civil airliners belonging to Iraqi airways. The coalition seem to be like a big bully, who not only knocks someone to the ground but then puts the boot in as well.[785]

Another, though more sympathetic, clearly also found it difficult to reconcile the legitimacy of military service with the illegitimacy of the current war:

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[784] Popular 'unity' remains a crucial aspect of popular memory of the Second World War, and one that has been contested since the war's end. See: Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 269-271; Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 276-280; Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 126.
[785] MO D1602, male, born 1942.

It seems much simpler to honour those who served in wars which happened a long time ago than to reconcile my thoughts on the military and current conflicts in the present. I always buy a poppy and I think it's very important to respect and honour people who served. Yet I know that I do not agree with most of the military action that has been taken by this country in recent years.[786]

I am not involved in either supporting our troops but nor have I been on any anti-war protests. I don't support the current conflicts we are involved in but that doesn't mean I don't feel for our soldiers who are out there.[787]

For some, the efforts of the volunteer soldiers prosecuting an obviously illegitimate campaign meant they faced a share of responsibility. Yet few were openly hostile. Most observers seemed able to characterise the war in Iraq as illegitimate or unjustified, while simultaneously stressing their respect for Britain's professional military personnel.

Within later responses observers frequently described the campaign in Iraq as a failure - something which seemed to compound a sense that the war had been unjustified from the beginning - and that the soldiers who fought it found themselves in a difficult and unenviable predicament:

The early victory they had was, perhaps, all they [the British and American governments] thought they needed to quell any insurgency and they just found out they had bitten of more than they could chew. I think the average person wants the troops pulled out now because they don't believe the price that has been and continues to be paid was worth the result.[788]

The British army leave Iraq for good, handing over to US troops. Was this adventure for good or bad? Hard to tell at this stage. The people who have lost loved ones would not consider it a success. I count all nationalities in this. Are all these deaths endured worth the downfall of a tyrant? I am not

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[786] MO C4131, female, born 1982.
[787] MO P3213, female, born 1966.
[788] MO M3408, female, born 1946.

sure about this at all. The people in Iraq are still living day to day with poor services of power, water and sanitation.[789]

It is important to note here the centrality of frontline ground forces within observers' responses. Unlike previous conflicts in the Gulf and Kosovo wars, the Iraq War involved a short invasion and aerial bombardment, but soon turned into a lengthy occupation in which frontline soldiers were central. As such observers were concerned with Britain's ground forces and identified conflicts in Iraq and then Afghanistan (particularly following the deployment to Helmand in 2006) fought not by jet pilots but by frontline troops. Yet the specific context of the occupation precluded any celebration or triumph that marked Britain's victory over Argentina. Instead British forces were described as humane, professional and competent during the early stages of the Iraq campaign, but were increasingly considered to be fighting a losing war by the 2008 directive.[790]

One might expect support for Britain's military to decrease within responses as observers became more critical of Britain's continued involvement in the war. However, it is evident that most engaged in a more "personalised and domesticated"[791] construction of combat personnel in the Iraq War. Its specific circumstances elicited a broad sympathy for the men and women caught up in it, including family and friends waiting anxiously at home:

I feel sorry for our troops out there and for the many families (girl/boyfriends, partners, wives/husbands, parents, children) that they have left behind. Of course, my thoughts are with them as I look at my son, aged 21, and think that many of them are of a similar age. I can imagine my son

[789] MO G3655, male, born 1939.
[790] These responses followed the retreat by British forces from inner-city Basra in 2007, though no observers discussed this specifically. See: Fairweather, *A War of Choice*.
[791] King, "The Afghan War", 1.

wishing he was at home and yet knowing he had a job to do. However, as a mother, I know how very scared he would be and how very frightened I would feel.[792]

The perceived conditions of the Iraq conflict, not only the vicissitudes of occupation and counter-insurgency, but also a pervasive belief in its lack of legitimacy, resulted in a representation of soldiers and soldiering foregrounded by empathy, sensitivity to trauma and emotional awareness. As British forces began to suffer more casualties, first in Iraq and then in Helmand Province, observers reflected sympathetically on soldiers as individuals, trapped in a difficult or traumatic situation:

> It would be impossible to write on this subject without saying something about our national attitudes to the men, and in these modern days women too, who fight our wars. It is determinedly shoddy, witness the squalid accommodation provided for military personal, the penny pinching approach to providing even basic equipment and the way maimed veterans are pushed out of the picture.[793]

> There is also the end of our troops' involvement in Iraq. Those coming home will no doubt be sent to Afghanistan where the war against terrorism seems to be getting nowhere, and one wonders if there is any point in our troops fighting and dying there, especially as they are under-equipped and their families have to live in substandard accommodation if the Army provides it.[794]

Such responses reflected an underlying similarity with responses related to previous conflicts based on an admiring and respectful attitude toward military personnel, as embodied by frontline, ground forces. Yet contemporary circumstances affected the specific ways in which Britain's military forces were represented by observers. During and after the 1982 Falklands War most had conceived of soldierly heroism by referring to

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[792] MO F2949, female, born 1954.
[793] MO C3167, male, born 1971.
[794] MO B2605, female, born 1931.

the strength, courage and martial prowess of Britain's soldiers, evidenced by the triumph of their military victory. Following the invasion of Iraq observers did not abandon a reverent attitude, but instead began to recast heroism as a form of victimhood; Britain's soldiers persevered courageously and resiliently despite the conditions of the conflict and the cause for which they fought. Observers sought to contrast the legitimacy of military service with the political failure of the Iraq invasion. They concentrated their ire against government or elites who had betrayed Britain's soldiers. This narrative pervaded responses submitted after the invasion, particularly to the 2008 'War experiences and reflections' directive:

Those who have to fight because of the stupidity of politicians deserve the greatest respect. It is utterly sickening to see politicians uttering 'sincere regret' for the fallen when they are ultimately responsible, being unable to negotiate without conflict.[795]

I am sickened by the way troops are treated by the establishment and the politicians… I always buy a poppy on Armistice Day and observe the silence even if I am on my own. The troops are not at fault but the politicians and diplomats who got us into the mess are to blame.[796]

I respect the job that the military do but do not support as much the political decisions which are made to send these troops out. I did not really support Tony Blair's decisions to send troops to Iraq and Afghanistan but would not feel moved enough to march in an anti-war protest as I think that is disrespectful to the military.[797]

I do support our boys and girls BUT they should not be there [Iraq]… Yes we should have helped when he [Hussein] started war on Kuwait but that should have been the end of it but oh no, Tony

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[795] MO P3209, male, born 1939.
[796] MO W2174, male, born 1944.
[797] MO A4348, female, born 1982.

> Blair PM decided to become George Bush's lap dog and did whatever he was told to do at the expense of our young men and women… I would always support our services… they have my full support.[798]

Observers conceived of the Iraq War as a defeat. Yet, they rarely discussed actual combat, specific battles or locations, or the prospects for the counter-insurgency operation. As in all cases I consider, observers were not party to detailed information about the military campaign itself, and had not experienced it first-hand; they were *imagining* what the current conflict was like. This necessarily involved narrating its meaning as an experience for Britain and its military, and foregrounding it as part of Britain's ongoing military tradition. Thus observers articulated familiar ideas rooted in what they knew about Britain's past experiences. They described the use of 'shock and awe' tactics as a demonstration of the unethical and ineffective use of bombing. More striking however, is the extent to which the specific conditions of the Iraq War – its perceived lack of legitimacy in particular – resulted in a widespread articulation of soldierly victimhood. Observers on the whole remained supportive of the British military, embodied after the initial invasion by its frontline ground forces. They did not abandon or critique a broad belief in the legitimacy or heroism of military service, but instead re-ordered the ways in which soldierly heroism could be articulated. The lack of a political or moral justification for their deployment was seen by most observers as a further obstacle overcome by soldiers who found themselves in a lamentable situation. They contended not only with a physical enemy, but contemporary political failures too. The emotionally sensitive, humane and personal manner[799] in which observers approached discussion of soldiers was in marked contrast to the ways in which previous cohorts

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[798] MO M3147, female, born 1960.
[799] For further discussion of remembrance in the wake of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, see: King, "The Afghan War".

represented Britain's ground forces in the Falklands War or even as part of the Kosovo Force. It was the result of their interpretations of legitimacy and Britain's identity in the current conflict that helped determine this narrative structure.

Thus observers frequently articulated a paradoxical interpretation of Britain's military forces in Iraq. On the one hand, their suffering and victimhood cast front line soldiers as an embodiment of Britain's experience in the war; illegitimacy and failure. Yet on the other, they reveal that observers were able to detach military service from the specific context of the Iraq War as part of a wider support for Britain's military institutions, tradition and identity. The perceived lack of legitimacy did not lead observers to say that Britain should stop fighting completely or stop recruiting soldiers, or that it had made observers rethink the appropriateness of using military force itself. Military sacrifice in Iraq prompted observers to construct wider narratives of legitimate military service, and to allude to popular memories of legitimate warfare, most often predicated on the moral surety of mass mobilisation, conscription and the idea of 'peoples' war' they connoted. This characterisation of soldiers serving in Iraq, and later in Afghanistan, underscored a pervasive critique of contemporary conflicts, but also reinforced a sense that those conflicts deviated from a pre-existing and historically evident identity, one that was based on the moral and legitimate use of military force in defence against aggression.

Leadership, Tony Blair and Trust in Politics

Unlike responses to the Afghanistan War, most observers did not suggest that the initial invasion of Iraq was linked directly to religious extremism or international terrorism. Some did however, relate the effort to topple Hussein's regime to religion, culture or Britain's domestic society. One observer wrote that "a future in which other Arab and

Muslim countries believe it is right to attack our western democracy is unbearable"[800] while another worried about a conflict that could "set a whole powder keg alight, all the Arab states would get involved as would all the Moslems (sic) in this country."[801] Others were worried about the possible effects war in Iraq might have at home, exacerbating religious or racial tensions. One described how the conflict might make "the population turn against decent Muslims and asylum seekers. We are afraid we are nursing a viper to the bosom – so to speak."[802] Others lamented the actions of "the racists among us"[803] and "the activities of extreme right wing racist groups"[804] who peddled unrealistic connections between Hussein and British Muslims. In only one response was the Iraq War linked to a broader cultural clash between East and West:

> Maybe knowledge and education could defuse the situation, but eradication suggests force again. The initial and original reasons for their hatred of the West goes back centuries to the twelfth and the popular rise of the Crusades resulting in a desire of a Holy War of revenge in the heart of the Moslem world, the atrocities carried out by the Christian armies in Jerusalem at Christmas of that time and never forgotten by Islam.[805]

Though these observers discussed the perceived cultural or domestic impact of the Iraq invasion, it is important to note that most conceived of a military campaign that was similar in nature to those pursued in the Falklands, Gulf and Kosovo wars, namely that it represented a limited, conventional conflict with another state or regime. Likewise, the Iraq invasion was conceived of as a far-off, overseas engagement. For most observers it did not, at least initially, involve the sort of intense cultural overtone that discussions of

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[800] MO S2581, female, born 1951.
[801] MO B2154, female, born 1933.
[802] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[803] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[804] MO C2256, male, born 1949.
[805] MO W565, male, born 1927.

the Afghanistan War elicited, connecting a war against religious extremists to Britain's domestic society and racial, ethnic or religious minorities.

Observers instead focused primarily on governmental leadership, reduced most often to the Prime Minister. Indeed, Tony Blair's attempts to 'sell' the Iraq War to the public have become an important part of the academic historiography of the conflict.[806] Certainly, observers saw a personal connection between Blair's foreign policy preferences and leadership style, and the use of British military force. However, what they wrote about Blair was not homogenous or uniform, and was affected acutely by how observers conceived of the circumstances and legitimacy of the war itself. Among the fraction of those who supported a military intervention against Iraq, Blair was accorded respect and praise. One observer offered an interesting response, re-invoking and reconstructing a narrative in which Britain's pre-Second World War policy of appeasement was characterised as a failure to act soon enough:

> I have very little time for Tony Blair, but he went up in my estimation when he stood up to the pacifist whingers in the so-called Labour Party. There are still a few of the old guard who ought to remember what appeasement meant in 1938/9.[807]

Other observers, though they did not necessarily support the Iraq invasion, were willing to suggest that Blair had at least been acting in accordance with his principles or attempting to make the best of a bad situation:

> I am getting very fed up with the way the reporters talk of Mr Blair as though he was some sort of scally wag. I am a liberal but don't like the unnecessary rudeness to any party.[808]

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[806] Bluth, "The British road to war"; Doig and Pythian, "The National Interest"; Holland, "Blair's War on Terror"; Strong, *Public Opinion*; Strong, "More Spinn'd".
[807] MO R470, male, born 1934.

On the one hand you have America wishing to exert its influence in the area and on the other, the British saying quite clearly that you cannot impose your own conditions on this country. I begrudgingly have to say that Tony Blair is actually saying all the right things on this issue. The country must quickly be given back to the Iraqi people to govern themselves.[809]

These responses were similar in content to several submitted to previous directives issued in 1999 and 2001. Blair was considered to be facing undue criticism, given the difficulty of the circumstance in which he was trying to lead. Regardless of the legitimacy or prospects of the war in Iraq, these observers at least suggested that his behaviour was principled or statesman-like. They reflected a continuing preference among some observers to characterise Prime Ministerial leadership as difficult, complex and constrained.

However, the Iraq War represents a departure in this respect because so few observers, as a proportion of those considered here, were willing to praise or sympathise with the Prime Minister. Instead, most who wrote about Blair's leadership accorded him blame for an unjustified use of British military force:

I'm sure Tony Blair believes he's doing the right thing but I don't think he is. It's fair enough, exerting pressure on Saddam Hussein to reveal the extent of weapons programmes and to attempt to disarm Iraq, but flouting UN resolutions would be a very stupid way of going about it.[810]

He [Blair] is not a good statesman; he is not a good politician… He does not have the ability to avoid the war with Iraq and he is totally subservient to America... I'm more worried about what else Blair and Bush will dream up to get us into more conflict, just to satisfy their egos.[811]

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[808] MO C2078, female, born 1940.
[809] MO P2819, female, born 1964.
[810] MO A2801, female, born 1965.

Other observers also characterised Blair as a weak figure, capitulating in the face of American pressure, writing variously that "Blair is his [President Bush's] puppet, nothing more",[812] and that "His [Blair's] close association with a man like George Bush is part of the biggest misjudgement of his career."[813] Another observer queried; "Why Blair is hanging on Bush's coat tails I don't understand."[814] Blair was described as having inexplicably betrayed British interests in favour of those of the United States:

> I strongly oppose the current policy of the UK government in closely supporting the Bush regime in all of this. UK support is unnecessary, unjustified and ill advised… So why is Blair doing it? It is madness.[815]

> The humiliation of being English in this situation and of seeing our Prime Minister aptly described as the poodle of a super power led, I sincerely believe by totally irresponsible and misguided so-called Christian men and women, to war makes me feel physically sick as I write these words.[816]

Observers often attempted to rationalise the apparent illegitimacy of the Iraq invasion, and Britain's role within it, by suggesting that it could be explained as a failure of leadership. For some observers this was articulated as a weakness in the face of pressure from the United States and formed part of a narrative in which blame for the war could be attributed to a more powerful ally. This discourse was, as I consider shortly, embedded heavily within constructions of both American and British identity.

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[811] MO E743, female, born 1951.
[812] MO F2949, female, born 1954.
[813] MO F1560, female, born 1921.
[814] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[815] MO C2256, male, born 1949.
[816] MO D996, female, born 1927.

It is important to state however that observers did not suggest that war in Iraq was delegitimised by American pressure alone. In the previous Gulf conflict many observers had conceived of a justified US-led operation, despite the exposure of Britain's relative weakness. Again in 2002/2003, observers were concerned with the specific reasons for an invasion and on what grounds it would be justified. Having conceived of an offensive and unjustified war, observers often subsequently conferred culpability on the American administration.

Other observers were particularly aggrieved by Blair's apparent failure to heed the objections of the public. They lamented the uncompromising attitude of a Prime Minister who "must surely be aware the majority of people do not want to go to war",[817] who "has gone to war when he knows that the majority of people in this country are against it"[818] and had taken "the British to war against the wishes of the majority of British people."[819] Where some observers had been critical of the British government's subservience to the United States, others were critical of the strident and non-consensual manner in which Blair approached the Iraq crisis. Another vociferous opponent of the war wrote in 2002:

> This [Blair's support for war] is despite opposition from many Labour backbenchers and members of the opposition parties – but when did Tony Blair listen to what other people say? If he thinks something is right, he goes for it – a laudable trait in a country's political leader, perhaps, but in a democracy where time allows, the issues ought to be debated in the public arena.[820]

The occurrence of protest marches immediately before the conflict contributed to this pervasive belief that the Prime Minister had ignored the wishes of the people:

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[817] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[818] MO F2949, female, born 1954.
[819] MO A883, male, born 1933.
[820] MO D1602, male, born 1942.

I joined the anti-war march at the start of the Iraq war because I thought our involvement was misguided at best rather than for any general pacifism. I rather wish I had been more vociferous not that the government was interest in the electorate's views.[821]

I did take part in our city centre march against invading Iraq in 2003. The march was incredibly well attended in Newcastle as in other cities, but instead of listening to Joe Public, Tony Blair decided to listen to a moron in Washington DC instead.[822]

Of course, the extent to which these protests represented public opposition to the war cannot be known as even the highest estimated attendance of those marches represents a fraction of the population.[823] Yet they did indicate the uniqueness of the circumstances of Britain's part in the Iraq invasion. Certainly, none of the previous cases I have considered generated this level of public opposition. Observers were often keen to stress that the Prime Minister had dismissed their views, as reflected through unprecedented public opposition to the war, and that this was reflective of a failure of political leadership or personal character.

In retrospect, as a consequence of this perceived failure to heed public protest, some observers articulated a feeling that Britain's leaders and public institutions could not be trusted by the citizens they represented:

In this country I have deplored the lack of involvement in politics by the population at large, but now get the point. The government does seem to have lost its grip on the feelings of the country.

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[821] MO A3434, female, born 1965.
[822] MO B4291, details not available.
[823] The exact number of people estimated to have attended the London protest march on 15 February 2003 is naturally difficult to calculate. Police, media and the Stop the War Coalition estimates range from 500,000 to over one million. An ICM poll conducted in February of that year found that 6% of respondents stated that a member of their household had attended the march. See: ICM, "February 2003 Poll", Online, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20060926081333/http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2003/guardian-february-2003.htm (Accessed 03-11-2017).

Where is the opposition?... Like most people, I now have the feeling that most of Westminster is completely comatose.[824]

Two million people protested against the war and were ignored… It makes me rather apathetic about politics; the electoral system is crap, and no amount of mass demonstrations will stop the Government doing what they were always going to do anyway, so I lose interest in politics and occupy myself with personal concerns.[825]

Among responses to later directives this feeling of mistrust became more pronounced as the non-existence of Iraq's threatening weapons stockpiles was revealed. Though the possibility of Iraq's WMD programme featured less prominently with observers' discussions of the legitimacy of the conflict, the revelation that the government's argument had been based on, at best, an inaccurate assessment compounded a belief that Britain's political leaders could not be trusted:

I feel that we have all been fed such a lot of propaganda and misinformation in an effort to garner support for this conflict and yet few people seem to be swayed by what comes out of the White House and Number Ten.[826]

Tony Blair has been so keen to fall in as Bush's puppet he would have agreed to anything. I never believed the claims the two leaders made about weapons of mass destruction, and I said so loudly at the time.[827]

Questions are being asked but no doubt the same old lies will be trotted out. I will never believe another reason for going to war – not from the mouths of Blair and Bush… Clare Short denounced

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[824] MO C2654, female, born 1942.
[825] MO D3157, male, born 1955.
[826] MO B2978, female, born 1969.
[827] MO W2322, male, born 1944.

Blair and implied that the war was pre-arranged and that the intention was to go to war no matter what the inspectors said or whether or not they found WMDs. The real objectives were kept from our two nations. The foreign affairs committee is going to investigate.[828]

In none of the previous cases I have considered in this research did observers suggest that the government or political leaders had lied to the public. While perspectives on political leadership had often been critical, it is the specific circumstances of the Iraq War – and a widespread and intense belief in its lack of justification – which elicited a more fundamental scepticism of Britain's political institutions and leaders more broadly. For some observers, the invasion had not simply been a mistake, but had been an engineered act of deceit, eroding public trust in the state which prosecuted it.

There was of course, a party political dimension to the Iraq War. Left-leaning observers felt particularly aggrieved by the fact that such a controversial war might be pursued by a Labour government. They wrote variously of their disappointment in Blair's leadership describing how the pursuit of the invasion had challenged their loyalty to the Labour party:

I am anti the war [in Iraq]. I am disappointed with Mr Blair to put it mildly. He is not the Prime Minister I had hoped he would be. In the archives you will see how positive and excited I felt in 1997 in my opinions. I am since on the verge of tearing up my Labour Party card. I have voted Labour all my life.[829]

At [the time of the Iraq invasion] I felt quite robust in my allegiance to the labour party… But now, I feel I have been duped and cheated by the revelations regarding some of his most important

[828] MO B1771, female, born 1936.
[829] MO B1771, female, born 1936.

speeches being heavily influenced by spin and not based on the intelligence services information, as we were led to believe.[830]

Another described entering into membership of the Labour Party in order to more directly protest the Iraq invasion:

> I have been a Labour voter for my entire adult life, yet I believe the policy of the Blair government on Iraq is a betrayal of my vote and that of many others. In fact I believe that much of the policy of the Blair government is a betrayal of the Labour movement. I have now joined the Labour Party so at least I have more say than I would as a non-member, albeit a still derisory say.[831]

During previous conflicts observers' political affiliations had affected what they wrote about the incumbent Prime Minister. Observers with conservative sympathies had, for example, been more willing to credit Margaret Thatcher personally with victory in the Falklands War. Others who did not support her politically suggested that she was instead opportunistically appropriating it. During the Iraq War, the conflict was so unpopular that those who supported Tony Blair were among the most aggrieved, describing it as a betrayal of their left-wing values.

While it is not my aim here to outline how Britain's involvement in the conflict has affected trust in political institutions, parties or leaders since, it is important to identify that observers repeatedly suggested that the particular circumstances of the Iraq War had profound political effects at home.[832] Evidently a pervasive belief in the illegitimacy of the initial invasion translated not only into a generally dim view of Blair's leadership – whose strident posture yet paradoxical obsequiousness toward America

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[830] MO B2969, male, born 1951.
[831] MO C2256, male, born 1949.
[832] For a consideration of the political implications of Iraq as a 'defeat', and its links to broader political apathy and dissatisfaction, see: David Chandler, "Iraq and the Problematic Discourse of Defeat", *Globalizations*. 6, no. 1 (2009): 133-138.

seemed to embody Britain's identity in the Iraq crisis and conflict – but one in which Britain's domestic politics were thought to have been poisoned more fundamentally. Particularly among later responses from 2003, observers described how the conflict had undermined trust in the government, political class and in some cases, the Labour Party. This narrative was unique to the Iraq War among the cases I consider in this research, and was a function of the way in which observers interpreted the war's lack of moral and political legitimacy.

Thus observers' responses here demonstrate the extent to which they attributed blame for Britain's involvement in the war on its political leaders and elites. As I have suggested previously, the Iraq conflict was highly unpopular but also served as a prompt for observers to construct and reinforce narratives of British identity which were more stable and secure, most often linked to the Second World War, and within which political failure in Iraq could be incorporated. In placing blame for the war with political leaders alone, observers contributed to a broader sense that the war represented an anomaly or a betrayal of Britain's responsible, unobtrusive and defensive disposition. They could maintain that, despite contemporary failures, Britain remained a force for good with a celebrated past. They were, I suggest, particularly angry with Blair not only because of the policies he chose to pursue regarding the Iraq invasion, but because they were interpreted as antithetical to a pervasive and engrained perspective on British history. Blair served personally as an embodiment of Britain's contemporary identity in the war – illegitimacy, weakness or failure – but also helped to separate the failures of the state from an interpretation of the nation. The conflict was not an expression of *British* failure, but was instead a failure of a much narrower group of people and institutions, embodied by the incumbent Prime Minister.

The UN, USA, European Allies and International Crisis

Observers discussed Britain's participation in the Iraq War within the wider international context. During the crisis period in 2002 observers wrote about diplomatic splits between Britain the United States, and European allies, and within the United Nations. Though previous conflicts had engendered discussion of American power and a persistent dissatisfaction with the apparent weakness of the UN, the Iraq crisis was widely considered to have been more controversial, reordering relations between Western states and European allies.

Observers repeatedly discussed divisions between the British government and a bloc of European opposition led primarily by French President, Jacques Chirac.[833] For one observer European intransigence had forced the United States and Britain out of a diplomatic solution to the crisis; "I am not in favour of this war build up but I fear that France has messed up any chance of a negotiated settlement with their veto state making war inevitable."[834] For another however, blame was laid with Britain in supporting a military intervention which "flies in the face of the opinion of our major EU partners" and that was "contrary to the role of Britain in the past as a peacemaker."[835]

For others, the diplomatic crisis was thought to be a direct threat to the process of European integration and Britain's status within the European Union:

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[833] *The Guardian, "*France and Germany united against Iraq War", 2003. Online, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jan/22/germany.france (Accessed 07-11-2017); Jurgen Schuster and Herbert Maier, "The Rift: Explaining Europe's Divergent Iraq Policies in the Run-Up to the American-Led War on Iraq", *Foreign Policy Analysis*. 2, no. 3 (2006): 223-244.
[834] MO B1426, male, born 1935.
[835] MO C2256, male, born 1949.

It is a blow to my national pride and what I perceived to be my understanding I find that this is not so. Blaming France for the lack of another resolution at the UN sounds like schoolboy tactics… How can we hope to join Europe properly after this?[836]

Another observer was, however, "encouraged" to see the diplomatic spat caused by the Iraq crisis had meant that "we are now so at odds with the EU that maybe they will make life so uncomfortable for us that they will either turn us out, or we will decide to leave it."[837] Of course, observers often had pre-existing views on Britain's relations with European states and the European Union. Yet it is important to note that all observers who discussed the diplomatic context for Britain in 2002 and 2003 noted the extent to which Britain appeared to be isolated form its nearest neighbours, having aligned so closely with the United States. Likewise, another observer offered a typical account in which the Iraq conflict threatened to mark Britain's international reputation:

Questions will be asked in the House and I know that this thing will not go away. I still feel discomfited – that hasn't changed since I began the diary. I am concerned that the war will stir up anti-British feelings all over the world. Usually we have one of the better reputations but I feel this has now been jeopardised. I am concerned about our future relations with the European Community too… we seem to be drifting from Europe which I don't really want to happen but neither do I wish to join in a federation, but I do want trading and entente.[838]

The Iraq crisis seemed to threaten not only Britain's reputation internationally – assumed most often to be fundamentally positive - but also its place within Europe and the West. Within responses submitted before 2002, concerning previous conflicts, observers had not expressed these fears. The sort of international divisions that the Iraq War engendered

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[836] MO C2654, female, born 1942.
[837] MO B2154, female, born 1933.
[838] MO B1771, female, born 1936.

were an important part of observers' responses and were widely considered to be detrimental to British interests.

In fact, several observers suggested that the Iraq crisis reinforced their belief that the war would be a mistake for Britain. It revealed an uncomfortably close association with the United States and in some cases elicited praise and admiration for European leaders who seemed to be taking a stand in attempting to avoid an illegitimate war:

> I'm glad that most other countries are also against war – the French and the Germans and others. They are powerful countries so it would be a bad sign if they suddenly show support for the American campaign. I wish the Americans would take more notice of the outside world – although I heard someone say that 'the French call what we call 'Americanisation' 'Anglo-Americanisation'. We must not get wrapped up in all of this ourselves I think.[839]

> I have also been greatly heartened by the refusal of some European countries, notably France and Germany not to be browbeaten by the US government. I do strongly believe that Europe needs to develop a more powerful coherence to resist American dominance.[840]

Perspectives on the legitimacy of the Iraq invasion affected the ways in which observers represented diplomatic dispute in 2002 and 2003. During the Falklands War observers had been critical of the perceived neutrality of the United States and European allies in not contributing more obviously to the British campaign. They characterised the distances between Britain and its allies as evidence of a dismal 'neutrality'. During the Iraq crisis, this distance from European states was represented much differently, lamented by those who believed that the French and Germans were right to resist the current campaign. The diplomatic disputes generated by the conflict were considered by observers in light of

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[839] MO E2977, male, born 1981.
[840] MO H2447, female, born 1935.

Britain's identity in the conflict, and whether it could be considered to be using military force justifiably.

Observers frequently wrote about the United Nations and international diplomacy. The Iraq crisis offered yet another test of international resolve and the possibility of multilateral security. The high-profile failure to attain a UN resolution explicitly authorising the use of military force added an extra urgency to their discussions. Two observers offered typical accounts, stressing the desirability of international consensus reflected through agreement at the United Nations:

I'd hope that certainly the British government, if not the Americans too, would have gone to the United Nations for a second vote but, alas, no.[841]

Are they [Bush and Blair] going to listen to the UN? I know the UN isn't a perfect organisation by any means, but some semblance of acting within international law and convention would surely be better than appearing to show total disregard. Are they going to listen to all those other leaders who keep telling them to think again?[842]

Once again, the failure to avoid a conflict with Iraq revealed for observers the weakness of the United Nations as a forum for nations to resolve disputes peacefully:

The effect on the UN will be long lasting. Had the UN agreed to the war I would have felt differently.[843]

The United Nations seems to be taking a back seat these days and its authority undermined. That is just what happened to the League of Nations, which was formed after the First World War. The

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[841] MO F2949, female, born 1954.
[842] MO C2654, female, born 1942.
[843] MO B2154, female, born 1933.

> United Nations was formed after World War Two. Suddenly when it suits certain Heads of State
>
> they override the peaceful purposes of UN and the organisations become defunct.[844]

As in all cases considered in this research, observers believed that the Iraq crisis ought to be resolved multilaterally and peacefully. They were supportive of UN institutions, yet thought that the eventual recourse to war demonstrated their continuing weakness. Importantly however, few observers suggested that the lack of UN authorisation for the war delegitimised it. Observers were concerned with establishing whether the conflict was a legitimate act of defence or protection in the face of aggression. The lack of a UN resolution confirmed to most a much broader sense that the conflict was highly controversial and diplomatically divisive but observers remained concerned primarily with what involvement in the Iraq War reflected about Britain. They were far more concerned that Britain was using military force aggressively or in the offensive – contrary to what most observers believed about Britain's historical identity as a bulwark against such aggression – rather than whether British force was being deployed within the strictures of international law.

Given that the Iraq conflict was an overwhelmingly American-led operation, observers were naturally concerned with representing the United States' position within it, and Britain's relationship with its more powerful ally. Where previous conflicts had elicited criticisms of American power, and its exposure of Britain's relative weakness, the Iraq War was linked by some to American society and perceived national traits:

> …the people of the USA really have to address the issues as to why their country is so violently
>
> hated by a significant section of the World's population. Instead of doing that, the American

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[844] MO B1771, female, born 1936.

government is taking the aggressively defensive line with Iraq which will only make the hatred worse, and lead to further international terrorism.[845]

The Americans really haven't learnt anything from the September 11th attacks and the hatred with which they are viewed in large parts of the world. They are arrogantly strutting around without much apparent regard for what anyone else thinks. I hope that in recent days the UN has convinced the US to get UN approval for any action it takes, or better still try peaceful means.[846]

Values and actions are completely askew in America, and as Americans apparently dominate all the important parts of the entire globe, people there stuff themselves with food and support belligerence while allowing starvation to spread in Africa and people to exist in squalor at subsistence level in many countries.[847]

In previous conflicts observers had suggested that the United States represented a powerful but overconfident and arrogant ally. The Americans were brash and 'gung-ho' where the British were more considered, humane and tolerant. The Iraq invasion prompted a much more critical and all-encompassing discourse in which an illegitimate conflict was the product of failures and defects in American national character. The Americans, not limited by these observers to the governing administration, were arrogant, dismissive, belligerent and consequently 'hated' by the rest of the world.

Many were then, concerned about Britain's relationship with such a belligerent power. One wrote how it seemed like "we [the British] are the only ones staunchly supporting the US"[848] while another questioned Britain's alignment with the United States; "I fear for Iraq and I fear for us if Tony Blair goes along with George Bush… Under Bush Junior US foreign policy has become more aggressive or I suppose

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[845] MO C2256, male, born 1949.
[846] MO A2801, female, born 1965.
[847] MO D996, female, born 1927.
[848] MO A2801, female, born 1965.

September 11th marks the start of it."[849] Again, another observer questioned whether "we really want to be allied to such a bunch of dishonest, unscrupulous and self-serving crooks?"[850] During the Iraq crisis and the immediate invasion, when international tensions ran particularly high, many observers seemed genuinely concerned that the 'special relationship' with the United States was not in Britain's interests.

Indeed, some observers invoked the United States' late entry into the Second World War in order to suggest that Britain bore no historical obligation to follow the United States into its wars. One observer described how "the Americans waited three years before they joined us in the Second World War"[851] while another suggested that "there is no reason why we should follow the USA – they did save us in WW2, but were very slow at joining in."[852] Britain's 'lone stand' in 1940 was invoked by another observer to undermine any sense of obligation toward the United States:

> Why does Blair trot around at Bush's heels? Bush doesn't need our miniscule support and it only makes us another target for the terrorists whose real enemy is the USA, not piddling little UK. Nor is the USA grateful, after the last war they poured more money into renovating the Axis than their Allies. No wonder Germany and Japan had economic miracles. Not a brass farthing comparatively, for we who stood alone.[853]

While the overwhelming power and status of the United States did not automatically delegitimise the use of military force among observers (most writing previously had believed the Gulf War to have been justified, despite a similarly prominent role played by

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[849] MO B1533, female, born 1926.
[850] MO R2065, male, born 1916.
[851] MO B1819, details unavailable.
[852] MO B2154, female, born 1933.
[853] MO G1041, female, born 1925.

the United States), it made it possible to suggest that Britain's involvement in the Iraq invasion was out of character.

Indeed, consideration of Britain's diplomatic position in the Iraq crisis, and its apparent subservience to the United States, prompted observers to reflect on Britain's alliance with the United States in World War Two. Indeed, as Alex Danchev has described, the idea of a 'special relationship' necessarily indicates an historical narrative, rooted in shared experience and affinity.[854] During the crisis of 2002 and the initial invasion of Iraq, observers attempted to subvert this interpretation contrasting American 'neutrality' with Britain's celebrated 'lone stand' in 1940. Observers were able to both describe the contemporary conflict as the product of American failures and flaws, and to engage once again in a process of reconstructing narratives of British national identity that were not confined to involvement in the current conflict, but were temporal and historical. Observers did not limit this process of othering of the United States to its contemporary policies. The distinctions they made formed part of a more comprehensive narrative of *historical* national differences, which were and integral aspect of popular memories of Britain's Second World War.[855]

However, it is important to note here that though observers seemed highly uncomfortable with Britain's association with the United States in 2002 and 2003, such responses largely tailed off among later directives. While the vast majority maintained throughout the subsequent occupation that Britain had been wrong to go to war with Iraq, it is the high profile international and diplomatic controversies of the crisis period that engendered the most critical accounts of the US role in the war. Likewise, this process of othering was focusing primarily on America rather than on European allies. Observers did not make particular effort to characterise the national traits or characteristics of, for

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[854] Danchev, "Tony Blair's Vietnam"
[855] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 130-148.

example, France of Germany because they were not thought to have had a salient role in the conflict itself or, importantly, were not blamed by observers for an illegitimate use of force. The specific circumstances of the initial invasion affected how observers conceived of allied others, and what observers thought about the alliance with the United States. Observers' reactions to the invasion can be seen as part of a consistent reconstruction of ideas of British tolerance, competence and moderation which contrasted the perceived arrogance and belligerence of the Americans, a function of the particular circumstances of Britain's involvement in US-led military conflicts.

The Enemy: Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Regime Change

Observers' representations of the Hussein regime were similar to those submitted in response to the previous Gulf War in 1990. They overwhelmingly referred to a brutal and tyrannical dictatorship in Iraq. One observer gave a typical description, writing "Saddam Hussein is a dangerous dictator whose activities need to be curbed"[856] while another, writing in 2003, focused on Hussein's abhorrent domestic record:

> What is becoming clear is the absolute terror which the Iraqis have of the current regime there. When journalists ask them of their opinions of Saddam Hussein they cannot bring themselves to give their opinions due to the unseen terror that lurks within their communities where people are killed for speaking out against him. There was a story in the press of how a young woman waved to the coalition forces driving along the road, only for her to be hanging the next day.[857]

Like responses written in 1990 and 1991, observers writing about the Iraq War invoked a memory of Adolf Hitler in order to more clearly articulate the contemporary illegitimacy

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[856] MO H2447, female, born 1935.
[857] MO P2819, female, born 1964.

and moral repugnance of Saddam Hussein. One observer suggested that the confrontation of Hussein's regime was "like Hitler and the Nazis all over again"[858] while another asked if "we want another dictator like Hitler to alter the courses of people's lives?"[859] Nor was this condemnation confined to responses in which observers supported military intervention. Those who objected to British involvement in the Iraq invasion were often keen to stress the abhorrent nature of the Iraqi regime:

> While we all agree that Saddam Hussein is a cruel tyrant who should be removed (just as other tyrants in the world need removing) we abhor the idea that thousands of innocents should be killed to get him. With all his money he would probably escape anyway and live the rest of his life somewhere in comfort just as Idi Amin has done.[860]

> Yes, Saddam Hussein is a monster; but so are many other leaders of third world nations, and we do not attack them. We were told that the majority of Iraqis would like Saddam removed, and that their troops would not fight. The last two weeks have demonstrated that the second of those statements is not true; and we have little evidence that the first is true.[861]

Observers were, regardless of their views on the legitimacy of the US-led invasion, engaged in constructing a specific narrative of identity for the Iraqi regime, often reduced to its figurehead; Saddam Hussein. Like those who had attempted to represent the regimes of Galtieri and Milosevic previously, Hussein was once more described as a personification of evil and brutality; a 'monster' against which Britain assumed opposition. Invocations of Nazism and Hitler were likewise a feature of such responses, helping observers to clarify the singular illegitimacy of the Iraqi regime, and amplify their

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[858] MO C1713, female, born 1948.
[859] MO L2281, female, born 1933.
[860] MO B89, female, born 1931.
[861] MO B1989, male, born 1927.

disgust at Hussein's brutal dictatorship. Further however, the invocation of these popular memories meant observers were once more engaged in a construction of a particular historical narrative of British identity based on moderation, tolerance and democracy, and a stark moral contrast between Britain and its dictator enemies. Though many observers felt military action was *not* justified in 2003, most were keen to represent Hussein and his regime as fundamentally other.

However, after the regime in Iraq was toppled by coalition forces, Saddam Hussein featured less prominently within responses as observers began to focus on a new range of enemies in Iraq that were not as easily identifiable, and whose tactics or motivations could not be better explained by connections with Hitler or Nazi Germany. The transition from invasion to counter-insurgency was identified by one observer writing in 2003:

> There is bound to be a resistance movement made up not simply of supporters of the Baath regime, but also of many other patriotic Iraqis, who regard the Americans and British as foreign occupiers.[862]

Existing below the level of the state, observers described a new enemy in Iraq that used guerrilla tactics, did not have notable leaders, could not be defeated conventionally, and was similar in character to that faced in Afghanistan. One observer drew stark comparison between the contemporary enemy faced in Iraq, and Britain's enemies in previous wars:

> We are not dealing with an enemy in the same mode as those of the two World Wars, but dedicated guerrilla fighters - kill one and another dozen take his place - no doubt in the belief that a heavenly

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[862] MO B1989, male, born 1927.

reward will be given them. Try fighting an adversary with those concepts to guide them, very difficult indeed.[863]

Unlike previous conflicts in the Falklands, Kosovo and Gulf wars, the Iraq War did not end after the defeat of the targeted regime. The overthrow of Hussein was followed by a military occupation in which British soldiers faced paramilitary and militia groups who became engaged in both sectarian violence amongst each other and resistance against 'foreign occupiers'.[864] Observers noted these changed circumstances. The post-invasion phase of the Iraq War altered what observers wrote about Britain's enemies there. It became uncommon for observers to include discussion of the Hussein regime and place it within a broader narrative of Britain's resistance to dictatorship, tyranny or fascism. As in Afghanistan, the emergence of much different enemies during the occupation, in terms of their structure, methods and motivations, meant observers were unable to contribute to a specific construction of British identity, and were left wondering exactly who the British opposed in Iraq. Militia groups, paramilitaries or terrorist cells could not be more clearly represented by re-invoking memories of Nazi aggression. As I described in the previous chapter, observers discussing the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan after 2003 were unable to recreate a morally unambiguous history of resistance to fascism and dictatorship.

Evidently then, the Iraq War can be seen as a point of departure from a conflict involving a clearly understood and 'familiar' enemy in the form of Saddam Hussein and his regime, into one involving a much more obscure and unknown enemy. The war moved from an opportunity for observers to reconstruct a specific narrative of British

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[863] MO W565, male, born 1927.
[864] Fawcett, "The Iraq War", 325.
For a discussion of British military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the difficulties associated with those counter—insurgency operations, see: Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars.*

identity, rooted in the mobilisation of memories of fascism, Nazism and Hitler's dictatorship, to one in which Britain's continuing role seemed confused and less well understood, though still evidently unpopular. The legitimacy of the invasion was rejected most frequently because it seemed at odds with Britain's identity as a force for good, acting militarily only when required and in the defensive against aggression. Representations of the Hussein regime in particular show how observers were able to articulate the illegitimacy of the invasion more clearly *because*, at least in part, its initial circumstances engendered the reconstruction of a clear and morally unambiguous narrative of British identity against which it could be gauged. After the defeat of the Iraqi regime, observers remained highly critical of the legitimacy of the initial invasion and Britain's continuing role in it. However, as the occupation drew on, its connection with popular memories of Britain's Second World War, and Britain's identity within it, became increasingly fragmented as they seemed to retain much less explanatory power than they had during the pre-invasion crisis period or the invasion itself.

Conclusions

Observers represented Britain's involvement in the Iraq invasion clearly. They overwhelmingly conceived of a conflict in which Britain had used military force without justification. Very few observers were either supportive of the Iraq invasion (in some cases describing it as a humanitarian operation or a legitimate pre-emptive strike) or were unsure about it. They were evidently aware of the context of the Iraq crisis and the subsequent military operation, alluding to the diplomatic crisis it elicited, the initial campaign of 'shock and awe' and the subsequent occupation and counter-insurgency. They identified the Hussein regime as the target of the operation and were aware of the

circumstances of its downfall. However, perhaps surprisingly, few observers discussed legitimacy in relation specifically to either oil security or a direct threat from the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. In fact, most observers had made their minds up about the invasion's legitimacy from the beginning and were thus largely unmoved by subsequent revelations about the lack of Iraqi WMD. Few observers objected retrospectively on the grounds that the war had been sold "on a false prospectus".[865] The Iraq invasion is unique within the context of this research not only because it was so unpopular, but because observers were so unambiguously sure that it was wrong to use military force *from the beginning*.

Why then were observers so critical of the use of British military force against Iraq, if they were not wholly concerned by oil security or WMD specifically? Likewise, why were they vocal and clear about Britain's involvement in Iraq when they had been so unsure and confused about contemporaneous involvement in Afghanistan? Observers clearly *cared* about Britain's involvement in both wars, particularly so in Afghanistan as military deaths began to rise after the Helmand redeployment. These differences can be accounted for by considering the varied ways in which observers attempted to make sense of Britain's identity within these conflicts. The circumstances of the Iraq War engendered, during the initial crisis and invasion, persistent invocation of popular memories which helped to clarify or explain observers' perspectives in the present. They represented the enemy faced in Iraq as a familiar one, understood through its similarity to the evil of the Nazis and Adolf Hitler.[866] They understood the initial bombing campaign by referring to popular memory of the Blitz.[867] Most importantly however, they understood the Iraq War to be aggressive or offensive by contrasting Britain's present

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[865] Bluth, "The British road to war", 871.

[866] A dynamic which helped to recreate an important aspect of Britain's morally secure involvement in World War Two. See: Conelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.

[867] Contributing to a broader narrative in which the Blitz had involved stoic resistance and unity. See: Calder, *Myth of the Blitz*, 119-140.

involvement in a pre-emptive conflict with a secure and celebrated popular memory of Britain's entry into World War Two.[868] It is this incongruence that explains observers' overwhelmingly critical attitude; they were generally less concerned about the specifics of oil or WMD – at least initially – than they were about the apparent contrast between Britain's resistance to German aggression and its pre-emptive war in Iraq. Thus the bases on which observers had understood legitimacy in previous campaigns – as acts of defence against aggression or expansion, clarified by invocation of British entry into World War Two - remained essentially the same. Unlike those previous conflicts however, observers came overwhelmingly to a critical conclusion, linking Britain's Second World War to the present by contrast rather than association.

Further, as in all cases I consider in this research, observers' invocations of popular memories and their constructions of British identity in past conflicts were determined by the contemporary context over which they were thought to retain an explanatory power.[869] In attempting to explain the legitimacy of the invasion of Iraq observers once more focused on the legitimacy of Britain's Second World War. They invoked popular memories of Britain's defensive resistance to Nazi aggression, the patriotic unity of mass mobilisation, the stoic resistance of Britain's 'taking it' during the Blitz,[870] and the evil of Hitler's dictatorship. Thus they not only remembered the Second World War, but they reconstructed Britain's identity within it. They characterised Britain's experience as one that was fundamentally moral, a representation influenced, I suggest, by observers' collective desire to understand the specific moral and political legitimacy of a conflict in the present. This was, as in responses to previous directives, done at the expense of some of the most familiar constituent events of the Second World

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[868] See: Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 194.
[869] Todman, *The Great War*, 223.
[870] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 14.

War, or the 'big facts' of 1940 such as Dunkirk or the Battle of Britain,[871] which seemingly retained little relevance for observers. Likewise, observers were not concerned with whether the Iraq War was possible or risky. The conditions of another 'war of choice' and associated deliberations over legitimacy helped determined what sort of British Second World War was remembered.

Observers were able to construct a narrative of British identity that was assured and morally secure, and explain the Iraq invasion as a *political* failure. They were extraordinarily critical of Tony Blair during the initial invasion period not only because they believed he had made a mistake or was misguided but because his government had committed Britain to an invasion that seemed incongruent with what observers knew about its historical identity. The Iraq War did not, for most observers, offer a challenge to the legitimacy of British force itself. Instead, in prompting the invocation of celebrated and morally assured popular memories, the prosecution of an unpopular conflict represented an opportunity in which Britain's historical status as a force for good could be further reinforced, and its prosecution blamed on contemporary leadership, elements of the British government and state, or the United States. Contemporary circumstances were separable from a longer history and an authentic British identity.

However, after the defeat of the Hussein regime, observers' allusions to the Second World War largely ceased. The occupation, involving a sectarian, 'guerrilla' insurgency, could not be understood by comparison. Observers maintained a retrospective belief that the Iraq War had been a mistake, but a perceived change in circumstances meant popular memories of British entry into World War Two, or involvement in any of its constituent events, did not retain the explanatory power over the present that they had done during the (highly controversial) initial invasion. As the war drew on, observers less

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[871] See: Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 4.

frequently articulated an assured narrative of British identity as a bulwark against brutal, dictatorial aggression; they were increasingly unable to delve into this more secure or celebrated national past.

The limited, conventional conflicts that British forces fought in 1982, 1990, 1999 and 2003 varied dramatically in terms of context, circumstance and, most strikingly, the extent to which they were supported by observers. They represent a series of deployments which were increasingly unpopular; the justified effort to reclaim the Falkland Islands represents a high point before a nadir with the invasion of Iraq. Yet, despite the constant change and transformation in what they wrote about these wars, they all represented events which prompted observers to sustain (through both direct association or contrast) a broader belief in the moral certainty of Britain's historical identity, the crucible of which was a singular popular interpretation and memory of its entry into the Second World War. In both post-invasion Iraq and the Afghanistan War, as those connections fragmented because of changes in contemporary circumstance, observers became both unsure about Britain's identity in present conflicts, and less explicitly certain about Britain's historical identity as a force for good. It is the period following the fall of the Hussein regime which represents the most distinct departure among observers' collected responses, not because it was interpreted or understood differently to previous cases, but because it engendered a fundamental alteration in the ways in Britain's broader national or military identity was constructed. Observers largely ceased to recreate a narrative of identity based on morality and the absolute legitimacy of British military force, the vacuum seemingly filled by more unsettling and discomfiting discussions of terrorism, religion, culture and ethnicity.

<u>Conclusions</u>

Military Force, Legitimacy and British National Identity

The Mass Observation Project offers a unique source of written material volunteered by individual British citizens. The responses I have considered in this research show – as I argued in the introduction to this thesis – that 'ordinary' British people care about the use of military force, even when it does not directly impact on their lives, that they are informed about Britain's foreign policy and that, most importantly, they create and recreate complex narratives of identity, history and nationhood. The overseas military campaigns pursued by the British state between 1982 and 2014 were thought to be both material and physical conflicts in the sense that they involved armed combat, but also social and cultural in the sense that they were an important marker for constructions of British identity by those who did not necessarily experience them. Thus, the prosecution and outcomes of those campaigns affected what observers thought and wrote about Britain as an 'imagined community' with a unique history and sense of collective self.[872]

Of course, there was no homogenous or universal account of British involvement in its recent wars. Observers made sense of military conflict by referring to a variety of aspects and phenomena, the most important of which was a consistent attempt to articulate the moral and political legitimacy of using military force. Indeed, observers were not concerned about whether the use of force was risky or possible, but whether it was right or wrong. The notion that conflict potentially offered an existential threat for Britain was apparent only during the build up to the Gulf War. Its rapid conclusion altered what observers thought about conventional limited conflict, and revealed a sharp

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[872] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

departure from the anxieties and tensions associated with Cold War escalation, conflagration and mass destruction. Britain's campaigns in the Falklands, Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq were instead conventional, limited and confined to far-away places. Yet the possibility of killing and sacrifice drew observers to question, often with emotional urgency, why Britain pursued force, and whether it was justified. Legitimacy was thus a key marker of identity, its discussion prompted observers to construct Britain's role in contemporary conflict in order to explain military violence.

Within the context of the cases I have considered, the general perception was one of a decline in standards of legitimacy. The British were, for most observers who wrote about them, right to defend both themselves and others from outright aggression in the Falklands and Gulf campaigns. Interventions in both Kosovo and Afghanistan were characterised as complex and difficult, complicated by their association with humanitarian ideals and anti-terror objectives respectively. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a further departure in which Britain's use of pre-emptive force was widely represented as aggressive and therefore unjustified. Though observers' collected accounts of legitimacy shifted radically, they do however reveal a persistent belief in the legitimacy of force itself (in that observers were concerned with understanding whether force could be used in those particular instances, not whether it could be used at all) and that this legitimacy derived from its use in *defence* against aggression. Observers rarely went into specific detail about the nuances or historical context of the various crises which led to war, nor did they interrogate the specific policies or histories of those regimes and groups against which Britain deployed force. They were most enthusiastic about supporting a military campaign when they could describe Britain as provoked, defending itself or those who could not defend themselves, and reacting to an aggressive or expansionary Other. By contrast, observers were most critical about the use of force

when it appeared to reveal Britain to be the aggressor. For a group of British people whose personal circumstances were generally unaltered by these wars, armed conflict did not simply contribute to a sense of collective identity; it could not be understood as anything other than a collective, national experience.

However, observers' constructions of British identity were not linked solely to legitimacy, though they were nearly always informed by it. They often identified Britain with its military forces specifically, suggesting both that Britain represented a power with a military history pre-existing and separate from current conflicts, and that its military forces could embody ideas of national identity more broadly. Written responses revealed entrenched ideas related to what military conflict was like, and what it *should* be like. They were frequently critical of the use of airpower, placing Britain within the realms of an indiscriminate, inhumane and unfair actor. However, ground combat in the Falklands War and then later in Afghanistan and Iraq revealed the extent to which Britain's frontline, 'Soldier-Heroes' embodied a sense of professionalism, duty and resilience. They were, despite changing circumstances and contexts, largely wedded to an idea of heroism based on, as Graham Dawson has described, "the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle".[873]

Perhaps most striking is the extent to which observers were able to cast soldiers as the victims of illegitimate campaigns – particularly those in Iraq and, later, Afghanistan – deliberately separating Britain's military history and identity from contemporary political failure. Soldiers came to embody a complex narrative of identity in which the contemporary conflict could be blamed on politicians, elites or the state. Thus, perceptions of legitimacy affected the ways in which observers narrated Britain's involvement in recent conflicts, but it did not necessarily determine how observers

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[873] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1.

thought about Britain, and whether it could be thought of as a force for good more broadly. Observers were able to explain contemporary failures within a comprehensive discourse linked to other aspects or focuses of identity, part of which was a persistent belief in the legitimacy of British military force itself, and a trend toward articulating combat and service in a more sympathetic, sensitive and reverent manner.[874] As British society has moved further away from conscription and national service, and observers were less likely to have experienced it themselves,[875] it is striking to note how they continued to celebrate military service, and in particular, an admiration for those involved in frontline, ground combat. Soldierly victimhood was a discourse laden heavily with a persistent reverence of British soldiers, but also saw them come to embody Britain's position in an unpopular and illegitimate conflict; a fundamentally legitimate or 'good' power, dragged or misled into war.

Likewise, observers persistently constructed and reconstructed narratives of British identity by articulating ideas of identity for the Others with which it came into contact. While this process of othering is of course an ever present aspect of the formation of any structure of identity,[876] it is clear the possibility of armed conflict drew observers into constructing national divisions with greater urgency. They did not, for example, consider the character of Saddam Hussein or the nature of his regime in detail until the invasion of Kuwait and the beginning of Desert Shield. While the specific circumstances of each conflict were radically different, this process remained pervasive and important. Most frequently, observers were able to identify other states and groups whose intolerance, illiberalism, authoritarianism or extremism were characterised as totally alien or other. In both the Kosovo and Afghanistan wars in particular, a pervasive characterisation of the violence in those regions resulting from perennial, uncivilised

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[874] King, "The Afghan War".
[875] Beevor, "The Army", 66.
[876] Jensen, "Othering".

ethnic strife reinforced a dichotomy in which Britain was placed safely within the modern, 'civilised', Western world.[877] Repeatedly the possibility of conflict, and the identification of both various Others, led observers into expressions of British tolerance, moderation, peacefulness and democracy by comparison.

Indeed, observers did not focus necessarily on groups or nations against whom British force was deployed. With the exception of the Falklands War, all the conflicts I have considered in this research were US-led operations. It is then not surprising that constructions of British identity across the period were related heavily to certain ideas, tropes and stereotypes of American identity. Observers characterised the Iraq invasion in particular as one which reflected the belligerence and overweening self-interest of its American ally. This characterisation not only served to differentiate Britain from an Other, but helped explain Britain's role in the conflict. Observers' did not suggest in 2002 and 2003 that the Iraq invasion revealed Britain to be a malign force, but that is was a mistake thrust upon the nation from without.

After the invasion of Iraq observers began to discuss hostile Others differently. The Taliban, sectarian groups in Iraq, and Al Qaeda could not be understood as manifestations of a familiar ideology, or as singular, far-off entities. These circumstances engendered a shift in the ways in which observers conceived of Britain's identity by contrast, who no longer engaged in more familiar constructions of democracy, moderation or tolerance, and instead began to connect overseas conflicts with domestic politics, culture, religion and ethnicity. The notion that Britain could be separable from its various enemies – a constant feature of responses written between 1982 and 2003 – seemed to fragment as observers confronted the consequences of drawn-out occupation and counter-insurgency. Thus the occupations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, occurring

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[877] Barkawi, "'Small Wars'", 128.

within the broader context of the War on Terror, offered a more profound challenge to this stable process of Othering, and elicited a broader discussion that was unmoored from previous limited, conventional conflicts against dictatorial or fascistic 'Strong-man' regimes.

Observers were of course, driven by contemporary circumstances when describing conflicts. What they knew about recent wars affected what they wrote about Britain, thus the sources of their information – be it government, media, TV or press – should be treated as important determinants of their discourse. Yet observers often arrived at different conclusions regarding the same events. Their knowledge of contemporary circumstance had to be given meaning and, as a consequence, what they wrote was always embedded within a broader discourses related to identity. They did not simply describe events or regurgitate governmental or media analyses but were instead consistently occupied with understanding how these military deployments affected the "problematic, protean and artificial"[878] construct of the British nation, and how this interacted with the politics and policies of the British state. Even as the perceived circumstances of these conflicts changed radically, and new cohorts entered the pool of those writing about them, observers remained concerned with connecting them to Britain's national identity. In some cases these connections appeared to be obvious or clearly understood. In others, particularly after 2003, those connections seemed to be more unclear, ambiguous or uncomfortable. What remained remarkably stable throughout was the process by which observers persistently recreated a sense of national self as they attempted to make sense of Britain's involvement in war.

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[878] Colley, *Britons*, 6.

Military Force, History and Memory

In placing Britain's recent military conflicts within broader, pre-existing narratives of identity observers necessarily had to draw on their knowledge and memories of the past. In a number of respects this thesis has confirmed findings and arguments that are central to the academic literature related to popular, social and collective memory considered in the introduction. Observers re-invoked popular memories in order to explain better the circumstances of the present and thereby engaged in a process of construction and reconstruction of specific narratives of historical identity, creating a "common sense of the past".[879] This active re-invocation was affected by the contemporary context over which popular memories were thought to retain an explanatory power.[880] Therefore as contemporary circumstances changed so did observers' interpretations of this common national history and identity. However, I have used the words 're-invocation' and 'reconstruction' throughout this research in order to capture both the extent to which remembrance of the past occurred within, and was evidently affected by, the circumstances of the present, but also to emphasise that observers were persistently recovering familiar interpretations and memories that existed apart from contemporary conflicts. They were not inventing particular narratives of Britain's history or its identity so much as selectively refashioning them in order to make coherent connections with the present. They drew on popular memories that clearly had a much broader social and cultural purchase and are transmitted through wider society and popular culture.[881]

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the Second World War was persistently the most important event re-invoked by observers in this regard. Among responses to the Falklands and Gulf wars in particular, personal experience of 'the last war' served as a

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[879] Smith, *Britain and 1940*, 6.
[880] Todman, *The Great War*, 223.
[881] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 8-17.

generational marker,[882] often recalled by observers in order to narrate the grief and suffering inherent in war, or lend weight to their opinions on military conflict and combat in the present.[883] However, these personal memories were almost always articulated as part of popular or social memory which informed specific narratives of British *national* identity. Lived experience leant authority or authenticity to their accounts but observers' efforts to make sense of Britain's identity rather than their own meant the articulation of personal and popular memories were never separable; the two remained mutually constitutive.[884]

As such, even as the Second World War faded from living memory across the period between 1982 and 2014, observers' search for meaning in contemporary conflicts meant World War Two was persistently revealed to be an important historical event and a crucial marker of national identity even for those who had not been alive during it. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was highly unpopular, yet it was understood as such by a cohort of observers who were able to draw on popular memories of the legitimacy of Britain's resistance to German expansion. As a marker for generation, the Second World War was particularly salient. Yet it is also important to note that the manner in which Britain's contemporary conflicts prompted observers of all ages – those with and without personal memories of that era – to re-invoke popular memories and discuss Britain's national experience as they sought to make sense of the circumstances of the present. Indeed, it is interesting to note the extent to which different generations of observers articulated broadly similar accounts of the Second World War.

Thus, observers' written responses show how wars – even 'small' wars fought at distance by professional soldiers – are an important determinant of national identity. Observers were, by invoking these popular memories, not only constructing a narrative of

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[882] Summerfield, "The generation of memory".
[883] Noakes, *War and the British*, 131; Ibid., 162-163.
[884] Thomson, *ANZAC Memories*, 11-15.

British identity in the current conflict, but were also *reconstructing* more fundamentally much broader narratives of historical British identity. Indeed, the desire for an explanation over present circumstances necessarily led observers to reconstruct the past selectively, focusing on a narrow range of aspects of Britain's Second World War, the most important of which was a pervasive narrative of Britain's *road* to World War Two.[885]

As Patrick Finney has written, "[k]ey texts on British collective memory of the war often marginalise appeasement, implying that the epochal events of 1940 and beyond – Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz – have overshadowed the antecedents of the war in the popular imagination." While this may true of the cultural representation of Britain's Second World War broadly conceived, it is evidently not the case when considering the ways in which observers referred to World War Two. Appeasement, often involving direct reference to the "myth of Munich",[886] was persistently at the heart of their accounts, at least until the period following the invasion of Iraq.

This focus on the period immediately preceding the outbreak of war was a function of observers' attempts to understand the present. They were not worried about whether Britain's recent campaigns would be possible, risky or whether they could be won (save for fears preceding the Gulf War which were rapidly dispelled after the one hundred-hour ground war), but rather whether they were right or wrong. It was this consistent fixation on the *legitimacy* or morality of using military force which led observers to continually re-invoke a narrative of British identity that was definitively moral, and which rested not on recollection of the Second World War's constituent events, but on the absolute legitimacy of British entry into it. Thus, in focusing so heavily on *why* Britain had been involved in World War Two, observers refashioned a narrow

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[885] Finney, *Remembering the Road*, 194.
[886] Ibid., 217.

memory of the Second World War saturated in discussion of the evils of Nazi Germany's expansionary aggression, the brutality of Hitler's regime and the morality of British resistance by contrast.

Further, without any apparent existential threat during the period of Britain's recent wars observers largely ignored Britain's Cold War history and, likewise, did not draw on ambiguous memories of Empire or (post-)colonial conflicts which could not be articulated as a benchmark or guide to action.[887] As popular memories of the Second World War have continued to be contested in post-Cold War Europe, observers' responses demonstrate how contemporary military conflicts can engender and sustain a uniquely British and peculiarly moralistic understanding of a martial, national past.

Nor did the maintenance of this specific narrative of British identity require like circumstances in the present. This is revealed most obviously during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 when observers once more engaged in the recreation of Britain's legitimate entry into the Second World War as part of a *contrast* rather than by direct association. Observers could identify the illegitimacy of the Iraq invasion by its dissimilarity with the legitimate defence against German aggression and thus, in reconstructing Britain's Second World War identity as such, they were also able to explain British involvement in the contemporary conflict as a sort of anomaly or deviation. Allied states and political elites were blamed for mistakes which went against the grain of Britain's celebrated and assured identity in resisting aggression and 'evil'. A belief in a moral and assured national past was *reinforced*, refracted through observers' critiques of British policy in removing the regime of Saddam Hussein.

These popular memories were then, sustained and refashioned during the limited, conventional conflicts pursued in 1982, 1991, 1999 and 2003, where the fighting was

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[887] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 2.

between conventional militaries, between states, and the enemy was characterised as singularly familiar and illegitimate, often represented as a 'new Hitler'.[888] As I have shown in the final two chapters of this research, during the lengthy occupations following the invasion of Iraq and, contemporaneously, in Afghanistan, observers seemed far less willing or able to try to explain Britain's contemporary identity by reference to popular memories of the Second World War which did not retain the explanatory power they had done previously. Thus observers not only struggled to make sense of contemporary conflict by incorporating it within a broader, historical narrative, but also as a consequence rarely rearticulated a belief in a singularly legitimate, heroic and celebrated British involvement in World War Two.

The specific circumstances of the 'War on Terror' and, in particular, the occupation/counter-insurgency phases of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars reordered the way in which observers remembered and reconstructed Britain's past, and offered a challenge to a broadly stable narrative of identity that had prevailed among responses from the Falklands War in 1982 to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. No longer anchored in a persistent reconstruction of the Second World War, observers' reconstructions of an assured and moral British identity as a force for good appear to have given way to a more introspective discourse in which contemporary occupations during the War on Terror were linked instead to race, religion, ethnicity and domestic society. Of the cases I have considered, it was the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq which elicited discussion of Islam, immigration, or a connection between the battles fought overseas by British soldiers and "those who stir up race hatred",[889] supposedly given "somewhere to live and benefits equivalent to £10,000 a year".[890] Though it is difficult to know how individual observers conceived of British identity more broadly, or connected race, religion,

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[888] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, 269-271.
[889] MO M3408, female, born 1946.
[890] MO M3408, female, born 1946.

ethnicity and nation, it is obvious that the ways in which observers connected British identity with military force altered as they negotiated the new and unfamiliar contexts of the War on Terror, and the lengthy, unpopular occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Stability, Continuity and Fragmentation

This thesis seeks to make an original contribution to knowledge by showing the fundamental and intricate connections between British identity and its prosecution of military force, namely those campaigns undertaken in recent decades. I do not suggest that observers' written responses can be generalised or considered representative. Only that the volunteered and detailed accounts which they wrote, and the method I have employed in analysing them, show that Britain, its national identity, contemporary conflict, history and popular memories of past wars were inextricably linked across the period. Thus, Britain's 'small' wars, pursued between 1982 and 2014, are important because they pertained to a fundamental process of identity investments,[891] prompting people who were not physically or materially involved in them to imagine and represent the nation itself. I argue that Britain's military conflicts since 1982 were understood by observers by referring to popular memories of the past, were incorporated within much broader, historical interpretations of national identity, and that the circumstances of Britain's campaigns permitted observers to reconstruct and reinforce a narrative of British identity rooted in its moral and legitimate resistance to Nazi Germany. After the invasion of Iraq, circumstances were such that this narrative of identity began to fragment within collected responses.

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[891] Barkawi, "'Small Wars'", 129.

It is then, difficult to assess what impact Britain's recent military conflicts have had, and continue to have, on wider debates around British identity. Certainly, national identity is not affected solely by changing circumstances in foreign policy. Yet for observers at least, it appears that Britain's most recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq represented a challenge to a secure narrative of identity which had been periodically reinforced during previous conflicts. This, combined with the possible fading or dilution in importance of the Second World War as an object of personal experience or lived memory, means that, at least partially, a secure sense of the national self seems to have been challenged. While on the one hand British retreat from foreign military conflicts may remove the opportunity or incentive for British people to withdraw into a nostalgic national past,[892] it may also contribute to a broader unravelling of the 'anti-Fascist', post-War consensus.[893] As observers responses show, in circumstances where a morally assured national past is not possible to reconstruct, the result is not necessarily a more forward-thinking or progressive conception of British identity. Without this anchor it seems, anxieties related to race, ethnicity, religion and culture *within* Britain were brought to the surface, colouring what observers wrote about British involvement in later conflicts.

Mass Observation Project material represents an important resource in uncovering in detail, and on an individual basis, connections that are important in understanding how history and memory support interpretations of the national community, which in turn inform contemporary political debate and policy. Though not the sole determinant, Britain's period of overseas military conflict between 1982 and 2014 may well be of a particular importance in explaining the recent political and social upheavals within a nation that has at times seemed so ill at ease with itself.

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[892] Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 87-95
[893] Stone, *Goodbye To All That*, 291-294.

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Appendix I

Demographic details of Mass Observers cited in this research

Observer	Gender	DOB	Location	Marital Status	Home Situation	Job
A1223	Female	1925	Newark, Nottinghamshire	Married	Living with partner	Free Lance operator of Machinery
A1292	Female	1933	Croydon, Surrey	Widowed	Alone	Part-time Teacher
A1473	Female	1942	Lincoln, Lincolnshire	Married	Living with partner and children	Teacher, but working as playground assistant
A1530	Female	1937	Woodford Green, Essex	Married	Living with partner and children	Part-time English teacher for foreigners
A1646	Female	1932	Swanage, Dorset	Divorced	Alone	Housewife since 24
A1733	Female	1928	Birmingham			Retired, formerly factory worker
A18	Male	1944	Addlestone, Surrey	Single	With other adults	Unemployed, previously principal officer with local authority building division
A21	Female	1931	Gomshall, Surrey			Carer
A2168	Female	1930	Banbury, Oxfordshire	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly auxiliary psychiatric nurse
A2212	Female	1956	Watford, Hertfordshire	Married	Living with partner and relatives	Various and disability benefit
A23	Female	1912	Lincoln, Lincolnshire			Retired, formerly Nurse
A2464	Male	1960	Yarm, Cleveland	Single	Alone	Sixth Form teacher
A2801	Female	1965	York	Single	living with other adults	Unemployed
A2848	Male	1958	Preston, Lancashire	Co-habiting	Living with partner	Computing consultant
A3434	Female	1965	London	Married	Living with partner and children	Retired
A4348	Female	1982	Loughborough			
A883	Male	1933	Chelmsford, Essex	Married	Living with partner	Redundant senior architectural assistant
B1426	Male	1935	Bracknell, Berkshire	Married	Living with partner	Maintenance cleaning supervisor
B1442	Male	1923	Staines, Surrey	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly quality control supervisor with BA
B1533	Female	1926	Llanon, Dyfed	Married	Living with partner and children	Retired, formerly social worker
B1654	Male	1931	West Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Managers and Administrators
B1665	Female	1934	London	Co-habiting	Living with partner	Clerical worker in NHS

B1713	Female	1948	Preston, Lancashire	Married	Living with partner	Part-time receptionist and cashier
B1771	Female	1936	Mitcham, Surrey	Married	Living with partner and children	Part-time word processor for legal agency
B1819	NO RECORD					
B1939	Female	1939	Ipswich, Suffolk			Radio Monitor
B1989	Male	1927	Tunbridge Wells, Kent	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly English teacher
B2154	Female	1933	Moreton in Marsby,	Single	living with relatives	Retired, formerly therapy radiographer
B2240	Male	1921	South East	Married	Living with partner	Retired
B2605	Female	1931	Staines, Middlesex	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly part-time typist
B2728	Female	1955	London	Co-habiting	Living with partner and children	Local government officer
B2810	Female	1967	Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire	Married	Living with partner	Nurse
B2969	Male	1951	Hastings, East Sussex	Married	Living with partner	Retired (through illness), formerly social worker
B2978	Female	1969	Lewes, East Sussex	Married	Living with partner and children	Part-time freelance writer and musician
B35	Female	1941	Sutton, Surrey			Fitness Instructor
B36	Female	1914	Bayleigh, Essex	Widowed	Living alone	Retired, formerly shorthand typist
B3968	Male	1966	Eastbourne, East Sussex	Co-habiting	Living with partner	Unemployed due to illness
B4236	Male	1928	Wales			
B4290	Female	1970	North East			
B4291						
B43	Male	1956	Deal, Kent			Customs Officer
B45	Female	1925	Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire			Nurse
B4527	Female	1980	Cambridge	Single	Alone	Teacher (unemployed due to illness)
B48	Male	1908	Hull, Humberside			Engineer, Fire Brigade
B53	Female	1926	Leeds	Married	Living alone from husband with dementia	retired
B55	Female	1921	Tunbridge, Kent	Married	Living with partner	Company secretary
B66	Female	1930	Preston, Lancashire			Clerk, Accountants
B68	Female	1931	Sidcup, Kent			Housewife
B70	Female	1950	Uxbridge, Middlesex			Lecturer
B736	Female	1918	Harrogate, North Yorkshire	Married	Living with partner and son	Retired
B83	Female	1944	Birmingham			Writer, Dry-Clean worker
B84	Female	1921	Chelmsford, Essex			Teacher
B89	Female	1931	Leighton Buzzard, Bedforshire	Divorced	Living alone	Retired, formerly typist

B91	Female	1930	Romford, Essex			Teacher
C1043	Male	1960	London			Library Assistant
C109	Female	1949	Brentwood, Essex			Primary Teacher
C125	Male	1916	Hornchurch, Essex			Automotive Engineer
C138	Female	1944	Lydney, Gloucestershire			Shop owner, Oxfam
C140	Female	1951	Sittingbourne, Kent			Part-time secretary and housewife
C142	Male	1930	Bath, Avon			History Lecturer
C143	Female	1932	Edgeware, Middlesex			Secretary
C1713	Female	1948	Preston, Lancashire	Married	Living with partner	Part-time receptionist and cashier
C1786	Female	1950	Haddenham, Buckinghamshire	Married	Living with partner	School secretary
C1939	Female	1939	Ipswich, Suffolk			Radio monitor
C2078	Female	1944	Odiham, Hampshire	Married	Living with partner and children	Medical receptionist
C2256	Male	1949	West Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Professionals
C2570	Female	1921	Belfast	Married	Living with partner	Housewife
C2654	Female	1942	West Midlands	Married	Living with partner and children	Professionals
C2844	Female	1960	Southampton, Hampshire	Married	Living with partner	University Administrator
C2865	Male	1957	Norwich, Norfolk	Married	Living with partner	Internal auditor with local special needs housing authority
C2908	Female	1964	North West	Single	Living with related adults	Employee
C3167	Male	1971	Stoke on Trent	Single	Living with relatives	Warehouse operative
C4026	Female	1974	Stratford Upon Avon	Single	Alone	Librarian
C4131	Female	1982	Edinburgh			
C602	Female	1922	Hereford, Worcester	Divorced	Alone	Retired, formerly secretary, now political activist
D1419	Male	1923	Scotland	Married		Retired
D1527	Female	1960	South East			Employee
D153	Female	1912	London			Retired
D1559	Female	1927	West Midlands	Widowed	Alone	Retired
D157	Male	1918	Surrey	Married	Living with partner	Retired
D1602	Male	1942	London	Single	Living with non-related adults	Managers and Administrators
D169	Male	1949	Cheadle Hulme, Manchester			Producer, Granada TV
D1697	Female	1923	Blanefield, Central Region	Divorced	Living with partner	Retired, school assistant but mainly housewife
D2092	Female	1919	South East	Widowed	Alone	Retired
D2205	Female	1929	London			Retired
D2438	Female	1924	South East	Married	Living with partner	Retired

D3157	Male	1955	Altrincham, Cheshire	Co-habiting	Living with partner	Pay processing officer Royal Mail
D3906	Male	1966	East of England	Married	Living with partner and children	Personal and protective services
D4101	Male	1960	Hilton, Derbyshire	Single	Alone	Cinema Projectionist
D826	Female	1950	South West	Married	Living with partner and children	Employee
D944	Male	1940	Colchester, Essex			Bank Worker
D966	Female	1927	London			
D996	Female	1927	London	Divorced	Living with rest of family	
E1510	Male	1926	West Midlands	Windowed		Retired
E2836	Female	1950	Andover, Hampshire	Co-habiting	Living with partner	Self-employed marketing consultant
E2977	Male	1981	Newcastle upon Tyne	Single	Living with other adults/relatives	Student, Plymouth University
E743	Female	1951	Warrington, Cheshire	Married	Living with partner and children	Special needs teacher
F1560	Female	1921	Wales	Married	Living with partner	Retired
F1589	Female	1932	Audley, Staffordshire	Married	Living with partner and children	Retired
F1634	Female	1943	Ely, Cambridgeshire	Divorced	Living with partner	Market Research interviewer
F193	Female	1937	Hayes, Middlesex			Secretary
F194	Female	1918	London			Retired
F210	Female	1925	Newport, Dyfed			Journalist, Freelance
F2218	Male	1929	Seaton Delaval, Northumberland	Single	Alone	Retired, formerly NHS supplies officer
F2949	Female	1954	Colmworth, Bedfordshire	Co-habiting	Living with partner and children	Local historian
G1041	Female	1925	Purley, Surrey	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly librarian
G1241	Female	1933	Beckington, Somerset	Married	Living with partner and children	Part-Time receptionist
G1416	Female	1922	East of England	Married	Living with partner	Retired
G2134	Male	1919	Cheam, Surrey	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly manager in Dept. Health and Social security
G2867	Male	1978	London	Single	Living with other adults	Civil servant
G2883	Female	1950	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Unemployed
G3655	Male	1939	Winlaton, Tyne Wear	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly auto company director
H1541	Male	1944	Dumbarton			Freelance Film editor
H1543	Male	1930	South East	Married	Living with partner	Retired

H1705	Female	1951	St.Helier, Jersey	Married	Living with adult relatives	Unemployed
H1709	Female	1925	Oswestry, Powys			Farmer
H1745	Female	1951	London	Widowed	Alone	Social researcher in Academia
H1806	Male	1925	Bisley, Surrey	Married	Living with partner	Retired, formerly printing and general manual work
H1820	Female	1955	Callington, Cornwall	Married	Living with partner and children	Housewife and farmer
H2410	Female	1929	Yorkshire and the Humber	Married	Living with partner	Retired
H2447	Female	1935	Oxford, Oxfordshire	Divorced	Living with children	Part-time acupunturist
H2639	Female	1940	Ipswich	Married	Living with partner and children	Library assistant
H266	Female	1923	Kenninghall, Norfolk	Widowed	Living with partner	Retired
H277	Female	1920	Harrow, Middlesex	Widowed	Alone	Personal Secretary
H2825	Male	1961	Liverpool	Married	Living with partner	Nurse
H2911	Female	1964	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Student
H3821	Male	1952	West Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Professionals
K315	Female	1949	East of England			
L2281	Female	1933	Wrexham, Clwyd			Retired, formerly teacher
L2669	Male	1926	South West	Married	Living with partner	Retired
M2986	Female	1956	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Professionals
M3147	Female	1960	Conwy			Shopkeeper/Postmistress
M3408	Female	1946	West Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Retired
M354	Female	1948	Braintree, Essex			Retired?
M359	Male	1937	East Midlands			Student
M374	Male	1948	London			Student
N1592	Female	1931	Yorkshire and the Humber			Managers and Administrators
N3588	Female	1960	Scotland	Married	Living with partner and children	Associate professionals and technical
N395	Male	1931	London			
O409	Female	1910	London			Retired
P1326	Female	1938	South West	Married	Living with partner and children	Employee
P1796	Female	1946	South West	Married	Living with partner	Managers and Administrators
P2546	Female	1925	South West	Married	Living with partner	Professionals

P2819	Female	1964	South West	Married	Living with partner	Clerical and secretarial
P2973	Male	1947	London	Married	Living with partner	Professionals
P3209	Male	1939	Yorkshire and the Humber	Married	Living with partner	Retired
P3213	Female	1966	Wales	Married	Living with partner and children	
R1389	Male	1914	South East	Married	Living with partner	Retired
R2065	Male	1916	London	Married	Living with partner	Retired
R450	Male	1926	London			Retired
R456	Male	1915	London	Married	Living with partner	Retired
R470	Male	1934	East of England	Married	Living with partner	Retired
S2246	Male	1923	East Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Retired
S2581	Female	1951	Yorkshire and the Humber	Married	Living with partner and children	Clerical and secretarial
T1277	Female	1922	South East	Widowed	Alone	Retired
T1285	Male	1948	London			Volunteer
T1826	Female	1957	Scotland			Associate Professions and Technical
T1843	Female	1949	North West			
T1961	Female	1948	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Personal and protective services
T2003	Female	1949	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Professionals
T2071	Female	1933	South West			Retired
T2150	Male	1943	Scotland	Married	Living with partner	Retired
T2222	Male	1922	South East	Divorced	Living with non-related adults	
T2245	Male	1959	Yorkshire			Professionals
T2335	Female	1920	East Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Retired
T2345	Female	1957	Yorkshire	Cohabiting, civil partnership	Living with partner and children	Associate professionals and technical
T2459	Male	1915	North West	Widowed	Alone	Clerical and Secretarial
T2543	Female	1933	West Midlands	Cohabiting	Living with partner	Clerical and secretarial
T2544	Female	1952	Wales	Married	Living with partner and children	Process, plant and machine operative
T2741	Male	1921	South East	Married	Living with partner	Retired
T3129	Male	1968	South West			Managers and Administrators
T3775	Male	1936	East Midlands	Married	Living with partner	Retired
T3902	Female	1984	North East	Single	Living with related adults	Professionals

T534	Female	1952	South East	Single	Living with related adults	Personal and protective services
T537	Male	1897	East of England			Retired
T540	Female	1927	Yorkshire	Married	Living with partner	Retired
T544	Female	1926	South West	Married	Living with partner	Employee
V2327	Male	1943	West Midlands			Associate professionals and technical
W1382	Male	1924	South West	Married	Living with partner and children	Retired
W1388	Male	1946	North West			Processm plant and machine operatives
W1398	Male	1929	Carlisle, Cumbria			Retired, Deputy head teacher
W1476	Male	1919	Rayleigh, Essex			Retired, Editor
W1813	Female	1950	Stone, Staffordshire			Housewife, mother
W1893	Male	1924	Felixstowe, Suffolk			Retired, Chemist food industry
W1914	Female	1917	South East	Widowed	Alone	Retired
W1918	Female	1951	South West			Managers and Administrators
W1923	Female	1938	High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire			Housewife
W2117	Male	1924	Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire			Retired, Manager shipping company
W2174	Male	1944	South East	Married	Living with partner	Employee
W2244	Female	1929	Kendal, Cumbria			Retired, Infant teacher
W2267	Female	1926	Hanworth, Middlesex			Retired, teacher
W2322	Male	1944	South East	Married	Living with partner and children	Professionals
W2338	Female	1932	York, North Yorkshire			Retired, College lecturer
W2529	Male	1925	Morecambe, Lancashire			Retired, Day centre manager
W2588	Female	1923	Ely, Cambridgeshire			Retired, Primary teacher
W3163	Female	1958	West Midlands	Cohabiting	Living with partner	Clerical and secretarial
W3176	Male	1941	North West	Widowed	Alone	Retired
W3393	Male	1932	North West	Married	Living with partner	Retired
W3731	Male	1961	Yorkshire and the Humber	Married	Living with a partner	Associate professionals and technical
W3740	Female	1965	Wales	Married	Living with partner and children	Personal and protective services
W3895	Female	1965	North East	Married	Living with partner	Unemployed
W4092	Male	1974	East Midlands	Married	Living with partner and children	Associate professionals and technical
W565	Male	1927	South East			Retired
W571	Female	1937	Bingley, West Yorkshire			Shop worker

W632	Female	1941	South East	Married	Living with partner	Professionals
W633	Female	1942	Darlington, Durham			Freelance Journalist
W853	Female	1936	Wirral			Retired, Picture framer
Y2498	Female	1912	London	Widowed	Living with related adults	Managers and Administrators
Y2926	Female	1958	East Midlands	Married	Living with partner and children	Clerical and secretarial

<u>Appendix II</u>

Copies of directive sheets to which responses cited in this research were submitted

The Falkland Islands Crisis: War with Argentina

<u>MASS-OBSERVATION SPECIAL</u>

19 April 1982

<u>THE FALKLAND ISLAND CRISIS</u>

So many Observers have written in already about this that I thought it would be well worth asking for a wider reaction on what is the gravest development in our international affairs since Suez.

Was it mishandled from the start? If negotiations fail, should we act? And if so, how? If negotiations are to succeed, what do you think is the best solution? Is there a threat to world peace if we take any sort of military action, or is there a threat if we don't?

How does it affect domestic politics? How much support is there for the views of Tony Benn and Judith Hart? In general what do you think of the statements of politicians and other public figures on this matter?

Apologies for this barrage of questions. They should only be taken as suggestions.

As always I would be very grateful for your reactions. Please feel free to write in as your-views develop or keep.a .separate diary of your reactions which you could send in later:

Because of all this:.and also because Dorothy will be on holiday in the first three weeks of May, I shall hold back the Summer Directive until the end of May.

Best wishes,

David Pocock

The Gulf Crisis

MO
AUTUMN/WINTER DIRECTIVE 1990

This directive is in four parts! But please don't be daunted. They don't all call for masses of thinking and writing. In fact Part III is a list and Part IV doesn't require any writing at all.

I have tried in Part I to get away from the heaviness of the last two directives but I'm afraid you can't escape entirely because the theme of Part II seemed so crucial.

Please be sure to put your replies to Parts I, II and III on separate sheets of paper so that they can be filed away separately.

PART I: CELEBRATIONS

We want to know which are the most important celebrations in your year but first - please start by telling us something, very briefly, about your family background. Please record your religious upbringing (if any) and your present religious practices and beliefs, your ethnic origins - where you and your family come from (maybe going back to your grandparents) and any other social or cultural factors which you think are relevant. This needs to be only a few lines long, unless of course you happen to have a very complicated family history!

Is there one big celebration in your year? Or several? Have you had any special occasions recently which you could describe? (Obviously some of you could write masses on this. If you've been involved in a lot of big events, just list them and then pick one to describe in more detail).

Please include details of special food and drink, dress, decorations, present-giving, special rituals or traditions, music, singing and dancing, how long the festivities lasted, how well (or badly) everyone behaved. Was it solemn or festive, or both? Was it a family occasion? Who attended the occasion? And who paid? Was the occasion photographed or video-taped? Any funny incidents?

Your last birthday. How did you spend it? Did you receive presents and cards? Who shared it with you? Was it a typical birthday? What do you recall about your childhood birthdays? (Please mention your age now).

PART II: THE GULF CRISIS

Please record your immediate reactions to the situation in the Middle East covering the following if you can: feelings about the main .political figures involved, your reactions to military and diplomatic developments, to the hostage situation, to the Middle East generally and to the way Britain is involved and to media coverage. If you have personal experience of the Middle East, or relations in the Gulf, please say so.

As I write, there is unfortunately no way we can know how long the crisis will last. It would be very helpful if, even after you have sent us your initial responses, you could continue to keep a kind of log of your reactions to events. This could take the form of a 'Gulf Crisis' diary which you could either send in instalments or keep until you are returning your reply to Spring Directive next year.

PART III: MEMBERSHIP OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Please list everything you belong to, from the local darts team to OXFAM, from your trade union to your babysitting club. You should include local clubs, self-help groups, national & international associations, charitable organisations, pressure groups, religious groups, writers' circles, witches' covens, political parties, special interest groups, professional organisations, campaigns, discussion groups, coffee morning networks, motoring organisations, sports clubs, social clubs. If in doubt, list it.

Please make sure you explain what's on your list (eg don't just put initials). You could use the list above for headings. Please indicate how active you are in the organisation and if you hold office.

PART IV:..... AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

Could you bear to part with a recent photo of yourself? We would like to add to your personal file a photo for posterity. Some wartime. Mass-Observers sent in a snap shot of themselves and it's wonderful to be able to see their faces fifty years later. I know some of you have already sent in photos so it would be good to have a comprehensive collection. It can be black and white or colour and any size. It doesn't have to be a passport-style mug shot or a professionally taken portrait. It can be a holiday snap and it doesn't matter who else is in it as long as you are clearly visible.

Please send it in with a caption on the back stating the date and place that the photo was taken and your VOLUNTEER NUMBER.

LABELS: The use of labels for your acknowledgement cards worked very well for us and we are enclosing another one with this directive. Please write your name and address on it and return it to us still on its backing when you send in your next contribution.

Our Freepost address   our usual address (stamp needed)

The Mass-Observation Archive   The Mass-Observation Archive
FREEPOST 2112   The Library
University of Sussex Library   University of Sussex
BRIGHTON BN1 1ZX   BRIGHTON BN1 9QL

[DIR. 33 17.10.90]

Spring 1999, Current Issues

PART TWO
Current issues

Please remember to start a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

It is a while since we asked you to record your thoughts on some of the contemporary issues. Could you please give us some of your thoughts on any issue you feel we should be covering for the Archive. As I write, the following issues are now in the news or have been recently, and future researchers will be interested in your reactions. Please add your own subjects if you feel I have missed something important or relevant to to you.

(Not in any special order)

- Kosova and the war in Bosnia
- Genetically modified foods
- The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry
- The predicament of the Kurds

- The present situation over the Irish peace process
- Nurses' pay and conditions
- The private lives of politicians: recent scandals and "exposures"
- The solar eclipse, and the impact on Cornwall

PART THREE
Documenting the Millennium

Please remember to start a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

This section is not exactly about the Millennium itself but rather what you think we should be doing (if anything) to document the event, and people's feelings and experiences. Is it a significant occasion which we should cover? Or should we ignore it? Will people in the future be interested, do you think?

If you think we should be recording it, how should we do it? Ask for your opinions in the Autumn 1999 Directive? Ask for diaries to be kept for a period (if so, which period?). Ask whether people have plans for 31 December 1999? Ask about the millennium bug? The Millennium Dome?

As a Mass-Observer, what would you be prepared to do to record the event? Your views please.

DS/15 March 1999/Dir.No.56

Summer, 1999, Current Events

PART TWO
Body piercing and tattooing

Please remember to start your answer on a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

Have you, or has anyone close to you, thought of having any part of your body pierced or tattooed? We would be interested in hearing what you think about these forms of body decorations whatever your personal experience.

If you do have personal experience of either form, please tell us about it in detail - when you had it done, why you wanted it done, where it was carried out, which part of your body, what other people thought about it. If you had it done years ago, what do you feel about it now? What do you feel in general about body piercing and tattoos?

Stories please... and drawings or photos if that's possible. Please take care about confidentiality. Don't use real names.

PART THREE
Current events

Please remember to start your answer to this section on a new page with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, occupation, and whether you are retired or currently employed.

Thank you for all that you have sent us already on the current political situation, especially on the war in Kosovo.

Please continue to send in reports and comment (dated) on the news and your own feelings and opinions. These are most valuable.

If anyone is involved with the reception and welfare of Kosovan refugees into this country, we would be especially pleased to receive first-hand accounts from you.

DS/June 1999 Dir. No.57

Special Directive 2001: The USA: Tuesday, 11 September 2001

The Mass-Observation Project
SPECIAL DIRECTIVE
September 2001
The USA: Tuesday 11 September 2001

Dear Mass-Observer,

This directive will probably come as no surprise to you. Some of you have already been in touch with us. Whatever your feelings, whatever your point of view, whatever your personal involvement, we would like to hear from you. Please start keeping a thematic diary recording your own reactions and those of people around you to the events as they unfold in response to the tragedy in the USA.

You can write as little or as much as you feel able. Please date each entry so that we can chart changes in feelings and opinions. *Don't send anything to us yet.* Please keep it until after you have received the Autumn Directive in November and I will send you further guidance at that point.

Thank you in advance,

Dorothy Sheridan
Dir. No.64/18.9.01

Part two:
Has the world changed since 11 September?

Your general observations on the impact of war

What we would like to hear are your reflections on the longer term impact of the 11 September attack. There has been a lot in the media about the impact and the forms it takes, but is this something you have observed in your everyday life, in your own behaviour and thinking? In your friends and family?

As usual, please remember to start your reply to Part 2 with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

What about in the wider world? For example, here has been some comment that the decommissioning of arms in Northern Ireland is a consequence of the world's reaction to the tragedy in the USA.

I also read recently that the number of engagements and marriages in the UK and the USA has increased. One friend told me he heard there had been "more sex" (whatever that means!) and another friend told me she's abandoned efforts to sell her house because the housing market had gone dead.

Some people have worried about travelling abroad, and there is increasing awareness of security issues not only at airports but in all public places. Have you come across similar things?

Stories, anecdotes, rumours, jokes, observations, reflections and your explanations both serious and less serious please.

Your thematic diary from 11 September

I hope that you have been able to record your immediate reactions to the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September, and that as events have unfolded, and the US bombing of Afghanistan began, you have jotted down your views in a sort of thematic diary. Would you please send in what you have done with this reply.

If you feel able to continue to keep the diary going indefinitely, please do and you can send the next instalment in with your reply to the Spring 2002 directive.

Summer 2002, Issues in the News

Who pays for your pet's care?
Can you estimate how much having a pet costs you per week or month
(including food, general care and vets bills)

Who enjoys having a pet?
What do you think are the benefits to you or to other members of
your household of having pets? Please give as much
detail as you can.

It is often said that the death of a pet can
sometimes be as sad as the death of a much loved
person. What do you feel about this?

Part 3: The world situation at the end of the year 2002

Thanks to all of you still keeping a log of your reactions to the 11 September 2001 events. There is no need to continue with this log. The request below will be the basis for a new collection at the Archive of reflections on the situation at the end of the year.

At the time of writing, there remains the possibility of war with Iraq and the tragedies of war, confrontation and death in Bali, in the USA, in Israel and the Occupied Territories and in Ireland again. I know you have written about this before but I am keen to ensure that we continue to record everyone's feelings and opinions on these questions. There has also been the situation in Washington over the sniper (or snipers) and the threats to the people in this part of the USA, and the hostage stuation in Moscow?

What do you think about the anti-war campaigns and protests in the UK and abroad?

Please update us on your current thoughts on world events and be ready to send in reports should there be any unexpected (or expected) developments. We will not be sending out another directive until February so I do not want to miss getting your reactions to significant events in the meantime.

DS/Nov 2002 Dir. No. 68

Spring 2003, War with Iraq

Part 2:
Saturday afternoons & evenings

From time to time we have asked you to keep a diary of a day or for a short period.

This time, we would like you to record your activities from 12 noon to 12 midnight on four Saturdays.

They don't have to be any particular Saturdays – they can be the next four after you receive this directive, or any other four within the next three months (but please give the actual dates on your report). They don't have to be consecutive.

As usual, please start your reply to Part 2 on a new piece of paper and remember to include at the top a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Please note down not only what you do but whether it has been a typical Saturday for you (if you have typical Saturdays). Make a note of where you went, what you did, who you were with (no real names please). It is useful to give details about the food you ate, the costs of anything you paid for, how long things took and so on.

If you do very little on Saturdays (eg "watched TV all afternoon" or "slept most of the time" then that's fine too). If you go to work on Saturday, please say so and give details. It doesn't have to be an eventful day to be recorded.

Please wait until you have recorded all your Saturdays before sending in your reply.

Part 3: War with Iraq

Thanks to all of you who have been keeping a continuous or occasional diary of your reactions to and observations of the current international situation. I would be most grateful if you could continue to do this. At the time of writing, it looks as if war is inevitable but it is hard to predict what might happen. I would be particularly interested to know if you took part in the big **anti-war demonstration in London on 15 February**. If you did, any reflections on the experience, and any views on anti-war campaigns?

As those of you who have written for us for many years know, we can't - as part of this project - send out spontaneous requests for reactions to events as they happen so we rely on you to note down your reactions and your opinions as and when you feel you can.

Send in what you have accumulated with the rest of this directive reply. Then - as we are not sending out a Summer Directive this year - please keep a diary over the summer for returning with your reply to the Autumn Directive.

POSTSCRIPT: LONDON

As we were preparing the Summer Directive, the news came through of the London bombings on 7 July. By the time you receive this, several days will have elapsed but some of you may have already recorded your reflections. If not, please start now.

Jot down your reactions to events as they unfold in a diary form - that is with your notes dated.

If possible, also record the reactions of your family, friends and work colleagues to the events, to media coverage and to the commentaries of public figures.

Keep your diaries for a long as you feel there is something to say and send them in (using the FREEPOST address) either with your other replies to the Summer Directive or with the Autumn Directive in November.

Dorothy Sheridan
8.8.05

The Mass-Observation Archive ~ FREEPOST 2112 ~ University of Sussex Library ~ Brighton BN1 1ZX

Summer 2008, War: Experiences and Reflections

Family History Research continued

If you do FHR yourself.....
- Why did you first become interested in it?
- Have your reasons for doing FHR changed? How and why?
- Who do you do FHR for?
- How do you collect your information and pass it on? (if you do)
- Please describe an occasion when FHR has been discussed in the family. What happened, and how did everybody feel?
- What have you learnt through your FHR about yourself, your family and local or national history that you find most interesting, memorable or important?

If somebody in your family does FHR.....
- Who do they do FHR for?
- How do they pass their findings on? (if they do)
- Have they told you or another family member about their research?
- Please describe an occasion when FHR has been discussed in the family. What happened and how did everybody feel?
- What have you learnt about your family history that you find most interesting, memorable or important?
- Are you interested in FHR? Why/why not?

If nobody in your family does FHR.....
- Are you interested in FHR? Why/why not?
- Is anybody interested in it, but not doing any research?
- Why do you think nobody is interested in it?
- What role do you think FHR might play in a family? What questions might it answer?

Part 2:
War: experiences and reflections

Since we started writing this Directive, the events in Georgia have unfolded…meanwhile the war in Iraq continues….. what does it mean to you? Do you follow the news from war zones and from areas in the world in conflict, oppression and distress – Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, Zimbabwe?

> Please clearly state your age at the start of this section as well as your number and other biographical information.

How do you find out about war? Newspapers, television, films, the internet, books, radio?

War continued

How does the news of war connect to your own direct experience? Have you experienced conflict first hand either here (say during the Second World War) or in other countries?

Have you ever been in the military (in wartime or peace time) or been attached to any units in support of military activities? Your memories would be much appreciated, and especially any comments about how your experiences affected the rest of your life if you feel they did.

Are you involved in any current activities in support of the troops? Please describe.

What do think about anti-war protests? Have you been involved in any such activities?

Are there any photographic or film images of war which have had a particular impact on you?

Honouring those who die in war: do you buy poppies for Armistice Day? What do you feel about war memorials and services of remembrance?

Please use these prompts as a way of exploring the subject bringing in your own experience as it relates to your reply. Feel free to consider any historic conflicts which you feel are relevant.

Part 3: The Olympics

This directive will reach you after the Olympic Games in China have ended but please take a moment to record your views on the Olympics – possible themes might be:

> Please clearly state your age at the start of this section as well as your number and other biographical information.

- Sport and sports people: what taking part means and what you think about the different sports represented.

- The Olympics as a major festival or spectacle – how different countries prepare and host the games, the costs, the facilities, the impact and the long term value to the host countries.

- The political issues, especially this year with the demonstrations and critiques of China.

- Media coverage and whether you followed the Games yourself (and how).

- Your views about the next Games in 2012.

Please make sure that you include any direct experience or involvement with the Games and don't hesitate to tell us stories on the subject from your own experience.

_____

Please post your response to:

The Mass Observation Archive, FREEPOST BR 2112, The Library, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 1ZX Or by email to: **moa@sussex.ac.uk**

Part 2: Using the Internet

Again this directive theme is for everyone – whether you have a computer or not. We want to know what you think of the internet.

> Please start both Part 2 and Part 3 of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography (see page 1).

Your daily life
Please list any of the ways you think your everyday life is now affected by the Internet. Include everything you can think of that might be relevant whether it's related to your own home or your work place or in public places.

Getting information
Do you use the Internet to get information? Please explain if you do (health, leisure activities, education, TV iplayer and radio listen again, information about people, family research, bookings for holidays or entertainment, recipes, travel info, banking and financial affairs, community activities). Do you <u>trust</u> the information you find?

A force for good or ill?
What do you think about the Internet? What do you think about its benefits? Its dangers? Give examples if you can to illustrate your answer.

Are you on the Internet?
Have you ever looked yourself up on the Internet? What did you find? Was it a surprise?

Do you have a website or are you involved in a group/organisation with a website?

Do you have a blog? Have you thought about joining any online social networks like Facebook?

Part 3: Issues in the news: Spring 2009

From time to time, we ask you to record your reactions to and reflections on very current issues in the news. We can never be really up to date – even if we wanted to be - because sometimes we are writing the directive well in advance of it reaching you. And of course you may be answering the directive weeks or even months after you receive it.

However there have been a number of big news stories since January – for example, the election of Barack Obama as US President, the impact in the UK of the heavy snows, the financial crisis and the various stories linked to it about different banks and financial companies, the discoveries of fraud, the pay-offs to financial figures, the impact on ordinary people's lives and the increase in unemployment and house re-possessions.

There have also been other news stories – the BBC's decision not to broadcast the appeal for aid to Gaza, for example, the media coverage of stories like Jade Goodey's illness or the death of David Cameron's little boy - by April there will be more like this I am sure. These issues link into Mass Observation's general concerns with how the media chooses and handles the news, but also with issues of health and illness, with the treatment of celebrities and with how we react to the current political situation..

Perhaps because we are so deluged with news I am aware in writing the above that by April the issues mentioned above may be faint memories. Or maybe not! I hope you'll have a think about what YOU think are important issues and give your views.

Please remember too, that MO isn't an opinion poll. What we really want is your own thoughts, any relevant experiences you've had, any conversations you think have been important and what the views are of people around you at home, at work, in your community.

Please post your response to:
The Mass Observation Archive, FREEPOST BR 2112, The Library, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 1ZX Or by email to: **moa@sussex.ac.uk**

DS/March 2009/Directive No. 85

Are there any circumstances in which you believe that corporal punishment should be re-introduced into schools or be implemented by order of court?

What are your feelings on further regulating the use of physical punishment in the home?

How do you think that the public image of physical punishment has changed over the years? What factors have influenced these changes?

Part 3: Current Affairs in Summer 2014

> Please start part 3 of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

Every now and again we issue a Directive that asks you to record your reflections on current affairs, and recent issues in the news. Since the news is a fast paced business, and we write the Directives a couple of weeks before we send it to you, a Directive like this can never be current. For this reason, we are asking you to choose the news story you write about.

Recent news stories

Here are some examples of recent issues in the news to get you thinking: Gay marriage; MH17 plane crash in the Ukraine; the government cabinet reshuffle; Isis rebels in Iraq and Syria; the summer of sport; UKIP; the cost of living and home ownership; the ongoing Middle East conflict and situation in Gaza and the recent Church of England vote which approved women bishops.

What do you think about these issues? What do you think about the coverage of these events? Do you have any personal experience? Do they effect you? Have you had a conversation with anyone about them? What makes them interesting?

Please write about these or any other news story or issue that you think is important to document and record as part of your Mass Observation work.