May your tribe increase: Journalists' sources as news producers in areas of conflict, 1854-2015

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Abstract

This is a study about the changing culture of foreign correspondents' informal news sourcing in the field. In particular, the ways in which war reporters' published news texts have been shaped by non-journalist intermediaries who function to some extent as news producers. It is a mixed-methods digital news ethnography which compares the sourcing practices of contemporary war reporters with analogous examples in the past. The thesis uses 115 interviews with reporters, sources and scholars to examine changes in reporting practice over time. It is written from the point of view of the author being a former junior member of William Russell's 'luckless tribe' whose principal members are senior foreign correspondents. In the study chapters, which consist of historical case studies and fieldwork, I have identified a shifting group of adjunct members who help mediate discussion within the news industry and the academy about legitimate reporting strategies. I have termed journalists' sources who act as news producers 'parajournalists', who contribute in different ways to the reporting of professional foreign news reporters on location. In a series of historical and contemporary fieldwork cases about how facts about disputed events in areas of conflict are verified I take the literature in a new direction by applying the original 'lost' definition of objectivity, originally advanced by the journalist Walter Lippmann to identify continuities and discontinuities over time. It also reassesses some basic theory about the journalistic sourcing of news. While recognising the ubiquity and power of propaganda and news management throughout the past and present of foreign news reporting, it challenges longstanding claims about the nature of objectivity in the social sciences and re-examines studies by social constructionist scholars which asserted the dominance of official sources over news reporters.

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1. Introduction/Literature Review

Global affairs since 9/11 have been dominated by long-running conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. But these wars have been notably under-reported because journalists are increasingly absent from contemporary battlefields as a result of the threat of being kidnapped or attacked. This is the biggest current problem in the field of conflict reporting, which I address in this study. Specifically, I draw attention to its effect on news production. Scholars theorise that the current crisis has come about because war reporters' former sources, newly empowered by digital technologies, no longer need independent journalists to publicise their activities, instead publishing their own propaganda. Armoudian writes that 'traditional journalists have become disposable, problematic, or a tool to extort money and project power for some groups, such as Islamic State, which seek to control their own narratives (2017: 105). 'The terms of trade have changed. We live in a new and more dangerous world [. . .] war reporting as we have known it no longer exists,' wrote the former BBC war reporter Martin Bell (2008: 223, 222). There has always been a tension between journalists' professional commitment to uncovering the truth about disputed facts and the professional accommodations they make as members of an interpretive community which trades in introductions, information and gossip. These informal interactions have always been a feature of the way war reporters work in the field. However, the following review of the literature demonstrates that social scientists — prominent among whom are the now-classic social constructionist theorists examining sourcing in newsrooms — fail to address adequately how reporters and their sources negotiate sourcing on the ground and on digital networks and how this may have changed. Texts dating from the 1960s and 1970s (Sigal 1973; Tuchman 1972; Fishman 1980, Gans 1979), which primarily examined the culture of domestic news reporting in the United States, still underpin much of the basic theory of how news reporters work with their sources. However, their findings are much less applicable to the setting examined here, that of the sourcing strategies used by war reporters throughout the history of war reporting in order to deal with news management by officials in the field (Cottle, Mosdell and Sambrook 2016, Williams and Harris 2019).

1.1. The first professional war reporter: William Russell in Crimea (1854-1856)

This section describes the emergence and work practices of the first professional war reporter, the *Times*'s William Howard Russell, the prototype 'traditional elite foreign correspondent' (Hamilton and Jenner 2004). Russell was a 'parachute reporter', a role defined by Palmer and Fontan as an 'expert in crisis reporting who appears and disappears with high news value events in different parts of the globe' (2007: 21). There are two key facts about Russell's work practices in the Crimean war. Firstly, he depended on his good relations with the junior officers in the military for information and daily support. No system of news management existed. British commanders did not require Russell to seek their permission to work. Few of their successors would make the same mistake. Secondly, Russell found out what many war reporters would discover later: that it is difficult to work without the support of helpful people close by. Russell's solution was to outsource some of his reporting to trusted intermediaries, in this case officers who had been present at the day's key events. When his sources in the British military in Crimea stopped cutting down his tent — part of their campaign to drive him out of their encampment — they could be quite helpful. Russell had tried to embed himself with a unit of Guards (Atkins 1911: 134), part of the British force that fought its first big battle with Russian forces at the Alma River in September 1854 (Russell 1858: 97-132). The military authorities, however, were hostile: 'There were times when he was denied rations, [. . .] refused information such as casualty figures, and warned that, if he valued his safety, he would leave' (Randall 2005: 24). The way Russell worked with sources on the battlefield was straightforward: he used his eyes and ears. At the Alma, when he felt so overwhelmed by the experience of battle, Russell simply stopped every soldier who would talk to him and asked them to describe what had happened. By triangulating their accounts with his own observations, he was able to compile a reasonably accurate version of events. On the morning after the battle Russell was exhausted after ten hours in the saddle, and worried that he had never been quite close enough to the action to describe it accurately. When things looked most hopeless, the soldiers with whom Russell had been trying to ingratiate himself took pity on him, making him sufficiently at home to gather his thoughts. 'One of the Engineer officers [. . .] whom I knew a little, seeing me sitting on the parapet and trying to write on my knees, had a plank laid across two casks to serve as a writing table,' wrote Russell later (1895: 77). He got out the quill pen with which he would always compose his reports, and began to write. 'It was now that the weight of the task I had accepted fell on my soul like lead' (Russell 1895: 74).

> 'He couldn't be everywhere, and wasn't. But events he couldn't see for himself he found others to describe for him. What comes over in his accounts is the sense of participation and being there, the first-handness of it all. This is what distinguishes him from so much of the war reporting of a century and a half later. His heirs and successors are for the most part more prudent and more constrained. The armies they are alongside impose certain rules on them and access is more easily denied. Those who choose to work unilaterally, without accreditation to an armed force, are at increasing risk of being blown away [. . .] The dangers are actually greater now than they were in Russell's time' (Bell 2007: 3).

After Russell's ostensibly critical reporting of the conduct of the campaign in Crimea the myth emerged of the adversary press constantly in conflict with the state and the military (see Snoddy 1992: 43-6, and Randall 2005: 17-31). However, the military did not need to control Russell. He was essentially on their side, though critically so. As an upper-class Irishman, Russell closely identified with the English officer class. 'Russell made the mistake, common to many a war correspondent, of considering himself part of the military establishment. The one thing he never doubted or criticised was the institution of war itself,' according to Knightley (2004: 16). The same was also true for his successors, according to the journalist and editor T. H. S. Escott. He wrote: 'Throughout the Victorian Age the relations between the journalist and the general were on the whole those of mutual goodwill and reciprocal assistance [. . .] The new *entente* between the sword and the pen worked in the interests of all concerned' (1911: 355-6).

Russell's success led to a boom in foreign correspondence and his successors were the foreign correspondents bylined as 'Our own correspondent' or shortened to 'Our Special'. Waters points out that Victorian newspaper proprietors promoted these unsigned reports by supposedly heroic lone operators for sound commercial reasons (2019: 4), setting great store on the Specials' journalistic autonomy and agency. Essentially, it was branding.

1.2. Embedding, 'unilaterals' and other independent reporting in the field

Embedding, the practice of assigning a foreign news journalist to a particular military unit on operations, is usually thought of as a modern phenomenon. Carruthers describes embedding as a 'cosying-up that promises certain benefits for all parties' (2011: 54). In this thesis I will examine some of the ways and means by which reporters and other newsgatherers work partly or wholly outside such official embedding or accreditation systems and how this affects what kind of news is produced. In the first Gulf war (1990-1991), the US-led military coalition forced reporters who wanted to secure permission to work at the frontline to join what was known as a 'pool'. Those outside the pools were known as 'unilaterals' (Hedges 1991) — essentially, mavericks who were outside the system. In the twentieth century, when US forces had intervened in Grenada (1983), bombed Libya (1986) and then invaded Panama (1989-1990), the Pentagon had kept the media away almost entirely by putting reporters into 'pools', whose access to operations the Pentagon restricted greatly. The result was that these conflicts occurred almost without critical scrutiny from the media (Gellhorn 1998: 338-362, Keeble 1997: 39-58). The same thing happened in the First Gulf War, when the Pentagon again set up a 'pool' system for accredited reporters which was supposed to give them access to the fighting but in the event delivered almost nothing. When war broke out in January 1991 in the Persian Gulf between US forces and those of Saddam Hussein's Iraq after the latter invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the US Defense Department again granted minimal access to the press. There were about 1,400 journalists in Saudi Arabia by the start of the air bombing campaign (Keeble 1997: 114). Almost all of them stuck 'uncomfortably' (Boot 1991: 23) to the rules set by the military, partly because they were worried they would be thrown out of the country if the military saw them as troublemakers (Anderson 1990: 14). Few managed to successfully negotiate the reporting controls imposed by the coalition. Journalists who broke the rules often made themselves unpopular not only with the news management officials on the ground, but also colleagues, news consumers and executives in the news organisations (Keeble 1997: 119-121, Hedges 2005: 516-539, Fisk 1991). The result was a glut of similar coverage that failed to hold the military to account (Anderson 1991:12). During briefings at the press centre in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia the US military released a great deal of information that supported its case for the way the war was being conducted (Moorcraft and

Taylor 2008: 157). Foremost among this was video footage showing guided bombs and missiles hitting their targets (Taylor 1993: 63-75). Channel 4 News' chief reporter Alex Thomson wrote:

> 'Journalists did not go out and find stories, they were to wait until the military decided what the story was to be and that, duly, became the evening news or next day's headlines from Dhahran. Few people, it seemed, appeared to find anything about this arrangement bizarre. Most people appeared to take it as read: they were there to be spoon-fed by military public relations men and that was just fine' (Thomson 1992: 122).

Journalists in the desert who had been accredited with coalition forces found it hard to depict the long air war (17 January 1991-23 February 1991). B-52 bombers carpet-bombed Iraqi troops in the desert, but it went almost undocumented by international reporters (Keeble 1997: 179-187). Meanwhile, the news organisations fought among themselves for places on the pools that they coveted for their reporters (MacArthur 2004: 3-36). Independent reporting at the front was extremely difficult and few journalists accomplished it. My colleague Vaughan Smith from our news agency Frontline News managed to film the only existing independently-filmed footage of the fighting at the front line in Kuwait by wearing his old British Army uniform, using fake ID (Loyn 2005: 97-125). The unexpected 'invasion' by Iraqi forces[1] of the Saudi town of al-Khafji was a rare moment during the war when independent reporters on the ground could challenge the version of events put out by official sources. In separate incidents, pool reporters accompanied by US military Public Affairs Officers (PAO) from Dhahran had furious rows with more independently minded journalists who had made their way to the area and were interviewing US troops. One of the pool reporters who had been kept away from the fighting gave the inaccurate impression that the town had been recaptured by American troops. A pool reporter working for NBC told the *Independent* journalist Robert Fisk, 'You asshole [. . .] You'll prevent us from working. You're not allowed here. Get out. Go back to fucking Dhahran' (Fisk 2006: 766). The American National Public Radio reporter Deborah Amos managed to get an unauthorised on-the-record interview with a Marine officer confirming that fighting was still going on and that it was Qatari mercenaries who were doing most of the fighting. When reporters from the Dhahran Marine pool arrived, their PAO officer threatened to turn her over to Saudi troops and arrested (Thomson 1992: 207). Amos interpreted this as a threat to have her thrown out of the country in order to protect the right of the pool reporters from competition from unauthorised journalists (Amos, author interview). Meanwhile, Iraqi officials encouraged the Baghdad reporters to film civilian casualties but not the damage to military targets (Arnett 1994: 395).

However it is important to note that such accreditation systems had their origins in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871), considered in study chapter 4. During this conflict, the advantages of bringing the press under tighter control by formalising the arrangements

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[1] What the Iraqi tank commanders thought they were doing by crossing the border was later disputed. In Keeble's view, the Iraqi troops, who had no maps, had drifted into the town almost by accident (Keeble 2017: 219-221).

between the military and individual journalists were already becoming evident. The war also demonstrated two fundamentally different approaches to news management which are open to officials. The French side war was hostile to journalists and viewed them as a nuisance, introducing strict limits on their activities (Kranzberg 1950: 117-118). By contrast, the Prussian military provided a steady flow of information that, while not necessarily inaccurate, nevertheless gave favoured correspondents access to key sources in order to present their point of view and thus shape their journalism. Moorcraft and Taylor note the significance of the adoption of an informal 'pool' system instituted during this conflict by the *New York Tribune* and the London *Daily News*, under which correspondents within the 'pool' cooperated by sharing their copy. 'In the future, the military would develop this *ad hoc* cooperative mechanism and turn it into a formal means of control,' they write (2008: 17). When World War One (1914-1918) broke out, the Allied military forces immediately curtailed reporters' access to the battlefront and introduced strict censorship. British reporters who made their way to the front between August 1915 and May 1915 were 'treated as outlaws. Farrar notes that they could be arrested at any time by any officer, French or British who discovered them in the war zone' (1998: 13). Notably, on the very day France and Germany had declared war on each other, 2 August 1914, the French government immediately set up an innovative Press Bureau to enforce siege laws that had been passed in 1849 and 1878 to ban 'any publications detrimental to public order' (Ferguson 1998: 220). Luckhurst writes that the French authorities believed that lax control over the reporting of the war of 1870-1871 had contributed to their defeat by the Prussians. 'They were determined not to let it happen again' (Luckhurst 2016). Their British counterparts copied this approach (Hiley 1993: 243), ushering in what Moorcraft and Taylor call 'the modern epoch of government press controls and spin' (2008: 29).

Meanwhile in the later conflicts in Iraq (2003-present) and Afghanistan (2001-2021), aspects of which will be explored in study chapters 5 and 6, embedding systems set up by the US Defence department, and in the case of Afghanistan also operated by Nato, had become the standard way for staff reporters to cover these conflicts. This was mostly because it was safer for journalists. The reasons are outlined in the following chapter. Critics of embedding pointed again to a lack of curiosity, to put it mildly, on the part of participating journalists. In post-invasion Iraq in Basra in September 2003, a British Army 'Media Operations official, working with an embedded reporter and television news crew from the British breakfast television show GMTV failed to mention to that they had observed an Iraqi hotel receptionist, Baha Mousa, being badly abused. Over the next few hours Mousa was beaten to death in an adjacent building. Williams writes:

> 'Here was a media operations engagement taking a TV film crew almost unerringly straight to within spitting distance of a story that would have instantly wrecked the army's whole media strategy. And here too was a TV film crew searching for a story parking a few yards away from one of the most shocking revelations of the Iraq war. And missing' (2012: 71).

There is a pressure on war reporters to fall in with government propaganda when their own country is a belligerent. Few journalists succeed in resisting it. In an article entitled

‘Propaganda versus Professionalism’ published in the *British Journalism Review*, Harold Evans, the former editor of the *Sunday Times*, wrote:

> ‘War correspondents can be heroes — but can they be patriots? The question has tormented thoughtful war correspondents for more than a century [. . .] Put it another way: is the first duty of the correspondent to truth or to his country? The history of warfare suggests this is not a false antithesis’ (Evans 2004: 35).

1.3. In crisis: war reporting in the digital era

The period since 9/11 has been notable for major budget cuts in news organisations, the rapid adoption by sources and reporters of now ubiquitous digital social networks and the targeting of news professionals in areas of conflict. This section conceptualises those who intimidate, kidnap and kill reporters and other professional newsgatherers as former sources who no longer need them to publicise their activities.

1.3.1. Attacks on journalists

Numerous scholars have studied rapid changes evident in the working practices of foreign correspondents since 9/11 (Archetti 2012, Zelizer and Allan 2004, Matheson and Allan 2009, Hamilton and Jenner 2004, McLaughlin 2016: 190-213, Thussu and Freedman 2003, Paterson 2014, Williams and Harris 2019). Attacks on newsgatherers are the biggest problem in contemporary war reporting (Armoudian 2017, Palmer 2018a). Reporting in areas of conflict has become more dangerous since the turn of the century. While a total 2046 journalists were killed on duty in the whole period from 1992 to 2020,[2] those killed since 2001 comprise 1572 of that number, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).[3] The annual rate, therefore, shot up from just over 50 journalists killed per year, to just over 80. By comparison, only two out of a team of 84 BBC radio journalists who reported major battles, often at close quarters, while compiling items for the *War Report* programme were killed between 6 June 1944 and Victory in Europe Day on 8 May 1945 (Knightley 2004: 537). During the entirety of that conflict, in all countries, 67 died according to the nonprofit Freedom Forum organisation,[4] whose Journalists Memorial lists the names of 2,355 reporters, editors, photographers and broadcasters killed covering the news between 1837 and 2019. The equivalent number in World War One, according to the

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[2] See: https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&start_year=1992&end_year=2020&group_by=year [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[3] See: https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&start_year=2001&end_year=2020&group_by=year [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[4] See: https://www.freedomforum.org/journalists-memorial/browse-the-memorial/#search/?view_6_page=1&view_6_filters=%5B%7B%22field%22%3A%22field_40%22%2C%22operator%22%3A%22is%22%2C%22value%22%3A%22World%20War%20II%20(1939-1945)%22%7D%5D [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

same source, was two.[5] The commonly-cited number for journalists killed during the Vietnam War is 63 (Ricchiardi 2005: 46).[6] None died in the Falklands.

During the first Gulf war of 1991, Peter Arnett was sure that the American military would not target him for broadcasting from Baghdad. He later wrote: 'I'd had my confrontations with the Pentagon over the previous thirty years, but never had I feared that I would be assassinated by the American government' (Arnett 1994: 361). (Four journalists were in fact killed during the 1991 war, all after the US officially declared that hostilities were over.) However, the next time the US attacked Baghdad in 2003, reporters at the Palestine hotel were killed by tank fire, in what colleagues believed was a 'flagrantly reckless act by the US military or even a deliberate attempt to intimidate journalists' (Campagna and Roumani 2003) and American planes bombed Al Jazeera's bureau in Baghdad on the same day. Paterson identifies the United States military as a principal killer of journalists in Iraq and Afghanistan in this time citing US air strikes on the Al Jazeera bureaux Baghdad in 2003 and Kabul in 2001 (Paterson 2014: pp. 72, 81). The Committee to Protect Journalists reported 16 journalists killed by US troops in Iraq between 2003 and 2009 but did not find evidence to conclude that they targeted journalists in these cases (Committee to Protect Journalists 2009). Organisations which compile statistics on journalist killings face a persistent difficulty in compiling methodologically sound statistics of journalist killings in past and present conflicts (Cottle, Mosdell and Sambrook 2016: 52). The CPJ notes that advocacy groups have differing views about how to define who is and is not a journalist in areas of conflict. Therefore it breaks them down into various categories: staff/freelance and those working for local and international news organisations, as well as other kinds of support staff such as translators and media workers, bloggers and other kinds of online-only journalists and support staff such as drivers (Simon 2015: 150-171).

1.3.2. Attacks on journalists as a sourcing problem

The remainder of this chapter shifts from the culture and practice of war reporting to consider how sourcing theory applies to contemporary foreign newsgathering. Until the advent of the ubiquitous digital networks, a basic truth had applied: sources needed reporters to get their messages out to the wider world. According to Gans:

> 'Journalists see people mainly as potential sources, but sources see themselves as people with a chance to provide information that promotes their interests, to publicise their ideas, or in some cases, just to get their names and faces into the news' (1979: 117).

However viewing the reporter-source relationship solely in transactional terms may be less appropriate since sources can now publish their own version of events on digital networks.

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[5] See: https://www.freedomforum.org/journalists-memorial/browse-the-memorial/#search/?view_6_page=1&view_6_filters=%5B%7B%22field%22%3A%22field_40%22%2C%22operator%22%3A%22is%22%2C%22value%22%3A%22World%20War%20I%20(1914-1918)%22%7D%5D [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[6] Not including 'media workers,' according to this author.

The former frontline journalist Rodney Pinder of the News Safety Institute says the warring parties in contemporary conflicts do not welcome the "other side" that journalists represent, he took the example of the current war in Syria. Pinder said: '"We're not useful idiots[7] any more. We are useless. So we can be attacked from all sides"' (Simpson 2012). Matheson and Allan argue that the danger for journalists is evidence of the 'collapse of the notion of them as neutral observer' (2009: 17). Picard and Storm, by contrast, view the principal benefit accruing to those who kidnap journalists is as a money-making scheme, followed by the warning it sends to other journalists to stay away (2016: 9). The foreign news reporters who contributed interviews to Cottle, Mosdell and Sambrook's monograph *Reporting Dangerously: Journalist Killings, Intimidation and Security* (2016) also linked the way their sources had seized the opportunities offered by fast-changing digital communications to the increased dangers they face. The root cause, they told the authors, is:

> '[T]he capacity for belligerents as well as activists to bypass mainstream news media channels and send their own messages direct to their preferred audiences on their own terms and with their preferred images. This, according to many of our respondents, has increasingly undermined the earlier dependence of conflicting parties on news journalists and has thereby positioned journalists, in their eyes at least, as relatively redundant and therefore possibly without value' (Cottle, Mosdell and Sambrook 2016: 166).

The key idea for the purpose of this thesis is that journalists' former sources have therefore exploited social media to become news producers in their own right (There is an example from Ukraine in the introduction to Patrikarakos 2017). 'Journalists [are] expendable, since militant groups could simply broadcast their messages online, rather than relying on professional reporters,' writes Palmer (2018a: 128).

1.3.3. The diversification of conflict reporting

Two decades of shrinking news budgets and cheaper technology has lowered the barriers facing new entrants to the trade of news gathering. As a result, the old model of the staff correspondent based for long periods of time in a well-staffed news bureau no longer prevails (Constable 2007, Garton Ash 2010). Joel Simon of the Committee to Project Journalists, writes in his book *The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Media Freedom*:

> '[B]ecause there are fewer international correspondents, the frontline newsgatherers are increasingly freelancers, local journalists working their own country, human rights activists, and average people with cell phones (Simon 2015: 9).

All of this calls into question the role of professional journalists, and the importance of examining how they work with these former sources who have become empowered to produce news. In his provocatively-titled study *Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant*?

[7] It is unclear who coined this phrase, wrongly attributed to Lenin, meaning the possibility of using wrong-headed but co-operative outsiders for one's own political ends (Boller 1989: 76).

(2010a), the former BBC news editor Richard Sambrook asks what is the point of professional staff reporters. In the book, he explores the ways in which newly assertive sources acting as news producers in their own right have usurped the former role of foreign news reporters in the verification, production and transmission of information. The result, according to Sambrook, has been a ‘shrinking of professional foreign news gathering -– but an explosion of other sources of information’ (2010a: 98). Sambrook does not specifically focus on the reporting of areas of conflict, but many of his conclusions are applicable to the field. The BBC journalist, Caroline Wyatt, writes of contemporary conflict reporting after the invasion of Iraq:

> ‘Since 2003 it has become easier for those of us covering military action to check, double-check and cross-check what is happening thanks to the web and mobile communications, even if the internet and social media have added to the cacophony of voices and quite often to confusion rather than clarity’ (Wyatt 2013b).

Wyatt's comment points to the advantage of reporting in the digital era, and also a disadvantage. Reporters have far more sources which are readily available, offering many new sourcing opportunities, particularly on social media. The Channel 4 news reporter Alex Thomson says journalists are able to find a great deal of valuable material in the avalanche of material produced from areas of conflict by a range of actors in the field. He says it is inevitable that facts which those engaged in news management on the ground would prefer to remain hidden, as it were, ‘push up through the cracks in the pavement’ (author interview). However, as will be seen in subsequent study chapters, verifying which are the sensible sources on digital networks, including social media, is far from straightforward. The diversification of sources and local news producers within areas of conflict further complicates how foreign news sourcing should be understood. Fielding-Smith, Black and Ungoed-Thomas revealed in the *Sunday Times* (2016) that the US Defense Department had for years paid huge sums to the British PR firm Bell Pottinger to run a covert operation on their behalf fabricating stories deemed helpful to the occupying coalition forces’ war effort, placing the reports in local Iraqi television stations after the invasion without revealing their source.

1.4. Foreign correspondents’ use of fixers and specialised locally-hired staff

‘Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience, the cumulative offering by more than a century and a half’s worth of those professional, specialized tourists known as journalists,’ wrote Susan Sontag (2003: 16).

It is notable that scholars only began to examine the contribution that locally-hired fixers make to professional reporters’ news gathering in the twenty-first century with the publication of Palmer and Fontan’s (2007) study of fixers in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its aftermath. Murrell subsequently took the lead in writing about the way modern foreign correspondents enrol locally-hired people – fixers – to provide a range of support services essential for their reporting, including news gathering (Murrell 2010: 125-137, 2013, 2015). She wrote in her 2015 monograph '*Foreign Correspondents and International News Gathering: The Role of Fixers'* that she 'intended to set the record straight concerning the influence of fixers' (p. 2), drawing on Bourdieu's theory of social capital (Bourdieu 1986) to analyse where these ubiquitous but hitherto unrecognised locally-hired journalists fit into the power structures evident in gathering foreign news in the field. All of the 20 international reporters interviewed by Murrell for that book used fixers, partly for their language skills but also logistical support such as translating or driving. But, all agreed, the contribution of locally-hired staff went well beyond this and the most signify. They reporters she interviewed agreed that the value of locally-hired fixers was that they are usually deeply connected to the interviewees' own social networks (Murrell 2015: 108-115). Murrell writes:

> 'Correspondents hold most of the power in these relationships. They employ the fixers at will, and they can borrow their 'embodied capital' [. . .] to help them with their newsgathering up until the moment they decide to dispense with them. Recently, however, there has been a slight shift in power towards the local employee that may reflect a wider media shift towards emphasising the importance of locally hired personnel more generally' (2015: 2).

The importance of fixers to editorial processes in the field is now firmly established. Jukes writes that 'fixers are now part of the academic debate' (2019: 1800). In Murrell's 2010 journal article examining how, after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by a US-led military coalition, international reporters in Baghdad used locally-hired journalists to conduct news gathering which they could no longer do themselves, her respondents acknowledged that this way of working had the effect of distancing foreign correspondents from their sources. However, using local colleagues to gather news like this made it possible for facts to be verified that would otherwise be impossible to check:

> 'On the Baghdad streets, the correspondents would be blind without their fixers' "eyes and ears" [. . .] For CNN reporter Michael Ware [one of her interviewees]: "In the Iraq war as in all wars, everyone lies." He said the restrictions made it very difficult but not impossible to capture slithers or shards of the truth' (Murrell 2010: 134-135).

The fieldwork for study chapter 6 was conducted in Iraq 2010, by which time, as noted, studies had for the first time begun to examine the implications for fact-based news gathering of the use of fixers, producers and other locally-hired journalists, showing how indispensable they were to international journalists (Palmer and Fontan 2007, Murrell 2010, 2015 etc.).

Boczkowski, meanwhile, identifies the need for 'historicizing and localising new media' (2004: 146), in order to identify continuities in sourcing practices. Foreign news reporters have always relied on non-professional source intermediaries to help them verify news in informal source networks. I can vouch for this. Every piece of foreign news journalism I have ever done has been accomplished with the help of locally-hired individuals. By no means all of these have been professional journalists. Some of my best fixers have been non-journalists, or have even worked for free because they felt a personal stake in contributing to the story on which I was working. Murrell writes that fixers seek out journalists they want to work with for this reason, writing that they 'chase their quarry' (2015: 98). Murrell gives the example of how Pranvera Smith, a local student with English language skills, who became a fixer[8] during the Kosovo conflict in 1999. 'Her initial employment was with a Spanish journalist, who hired her that first day. But she instantly decided that "he was very slow" and would probably not get the story, so she moved on to work with an Italian journalist' (Murrell 2015: 100).

In the later fieldwork study chapters, I explore the reasons why contemporary foreign correspondents and their employers the international news organisations have become conscious of the need not to put others at risk when gathering news on their behalf. How much responsibility international journalists should take for fixers and a variety of other locally-hired staff has become the subject of heated debate within the news industry. This will be examined in chapters 6 and 7. It had not necessarily been the case previously. In his 1996 memoir *In Harm's Way,* the former BBC war reporter Martin Bell described, without commenting on the ethical aspect, how during the siege of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo (1992-1996) in the former Yugoslavia, he used to send his Belgrade Serb cameraman Dragon Havzijevic out with his sound-man to record dangerous combat footage without him:

> 'They had their own way of firing themselves up for assignments. They would drink coffee for the first two hours of the day and whisky for the next two. Then they would disappear. Some time later they would return with three minutes of the most vivid combat footage, which breathed the fear of death and the triumph of survival — a bit like a war movie without the sense of contrivance — and it made up in impact for what it lacked in length' (p. 62).

The implication of the passage is that this was an arrangement which suited Bell's crew. But with other staff correspondents, locally-hired members of newsgathering team did not always have a choice about whether to put themselves in harm's way. The former BBC Moscow correspondent Angus Roxburgh wrote disapprovingly in his memoir *Moscow Calling* of a rival journalist, whom he witnessed some time later in Chechnya pressurising a cameraman to obtain hard-to-get footage from an area he was reluctant to visit himself. Roxburgh described the scene thus:

> 'ITN's gung-ho correspondent, a man I [. . .] saw screaming at his poor cameraman to "get on that fucking bus, Oleg" — a bus heading into a besieged village that was about to be hammered by Russian helicopter gunships — while the correspondent himself stayed at a safe distance' (Roxburgh 2017: 258).

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[8] Pranvera worked as a fixer for, and then married, my former colleague Vaughan Smith, of Frontline News Television, the news agency where I worked, and which I discuss further in chapter 3.

As will be explored in the Methodology chapter and chapter 7, the Syria fieldwork, a heated debate has taken place over how far a journalist should extend any moral and legal duty of care to those whom he or she has commissioned to work in areas that are considered high risk since the events described in these accounts.

1.5. Collaborative news gathering, sources as news producers and 'parajournalists'

Journalists use a huge range of helpful individuals to construct their reports who play a role in forming editorial content. In the context of foreign news, that could include journalists they have hired locally to work for them, both international freelances and local journalists, fixers and local news producers, even — already noted — drivers and translators, and as will be considered below officials concerned with news management. As already noted, 'Journalists see people mainly as potential sources' (Gans 1979: 117). That is a very wide definition indeed of who is a source. This matters because it implies that from the point of view the professional reporter, all their interlocutors can become sources and potentially contribute to a news report which they construct. I will consider examples of all such individuals in various cases in this thesis. There is the question of how these relationships in the field fit into sociological understanding of foreign news production. While, as noted earlier, gatekeeper theory tends to view journalists as selecting largely passive sources and filtering them into the flow of news production (Reese, Vos and Shoemaker 2009) the classic sociological newsroom studies also conceive of sources and reporters in dualistic terms, eternally leading or following each other in a dance. Modern communications scholars represent these roles in a more inclusive way. The *Sage Handbook of Digital Journalism* (2016) contains chapters describing the activities of a far more diverse group of people who source and publish news from the field, including non-journalist newsgatherers who aid journalists to source their reports. They include 'activists as news producers' (Breindl 2016); 'semi-professional amateurs' (Nicey 2016); and 'sources as news producers' by Carlson (2016). The latter writes: 'Generations of scholars have warned about the detrimental reliance on elite sources: we now need to ask what is changing as well as interrogate why these changes matter' (Carlson 2016: 246). Similarly, the locally-hired 'fixers' and indigenous news producers in the field have also become the subject of scholarly enquiry. Another chapter examines how news gathering is outsourced to such individuals (Örnebring and Conill 2016). Meanwhile Domingo characterises contemporary sourcing as involving the 'hybridization of practices [which] blur the identities of the different actors involved. [As a result] the definitions of journalism and news are increasingly contested in the digital era' (2016: 147).

The literature on collaborative reporting in the field demonstrates that the contribution of non-journalists to sourcing practices in the domain of unofficial and informal sourcing has long been neglected. Tumber points out a particular failing: namely, that too many studies do not take into account the agency and autonomy of sources (1991: 443). More recently, Carlson has advocated that scholars 'probe special cases in which journalistic authority derives from unofficial, non-routine sources' (2009: 539). There is also the obvious fact that foreign news important enough to publish tends not to be routine news in the same way that domestic news is. Finally, Craft and Heim note that there has been 'scant' scholarly research in journalism about transparency, that is, how journalists show their workings for how they verify information (2008). The literature therefore demonstrates a clear gap in the knowledge of how war reporting has been sourced throughout its history. However, it is a challenge to understand the true role played by sources who to some extent function as news producers using the traditional, binary, sociological frame.

Taking a long view of the history of war reporting would be one way of understanding the effects on modern news production of sources who function as news producers, as well as how they fit into the conflict reporting literature. Williams writes that studying the historical development of the culture and practices of war reporting is a description of the development of important aspects of the story of journalism as a whole. He notes: '[I]t is worth stressing that many of the basic tools of normal practice were developed in wartime; the press release, the press conference and the press officer emerged from efforts by the authorities to respond to journalism at war' (2012: 344). Meanwhile Fuller writes that, 'War is the extreme case that reveals the nature of organisations that report the news' (1996: 90). On the one hand the sole agency of autonomous, elite foreign correspondents at the top of an imagined reporting hierarchy (Cohen 1965) has traditionally been over-emphasised (Pedelty 2013). As Williams puts it: 'There is an idealised notion of the specialised foreign correspondent put forward by the profession and promoted in the autobiographies and books of many foreign correspondents,' (2011: 174). However within the academy, the ways in which journalists source their news reports is seen as the key to understanding how journalism works. Schudson writes: 'Sources: they are the deep, dark secret of the power of the press. Much of this power is exercised not by news institutions themselves but by the sources that feed them information' (2003: 134).

One clue about how to study war reporters' sourcing lies in their sources and other intermediaries when they behave to some extent like journalists. In the field of communication studies, scholars have drawn attention to an apparently new phenomenon, that of sources who produce news on their own behalf, without the intervention of professional journalists. In a study on the convergence of the roles of reporters and sources that is written from the point of view of news sources, Ericson, Baranek and Chan note the ubiquity of official sources who fulfil some of the claimed functions of journalists in news production (1989: 6), by supplying copy and giving news reporters access to events on the ground in order to shape the journalists' resulting news texts. It has always been the case that most reporters' important sources in war zones are the officials who control their activities. They are known by various names. Journalists call them the 'minders' or 'babysitters', provided by the military or government information agencies who organise and monitor the activities of foreign news journalists in the field. Morrison and Tumber's book about the reporting of the Falklands war, *Journalists at War* (1988), remains the sole scholarly study of the ways in which official 'minders' and embedded journalists negotiate, and collaborate, with each other in the realm of foreign news reporting. The authors explore the agency of the reporters and that of the news management officials on the ground as conscious actors in the construction of their professional worlds, and examine how this shaped the reporting of the conflict. In a later study of the ways in which reporters embedded with the British navy and army became psychologically immersed in the world view of the military, Tumber found the imposition of strict reporting restrictions by officials on the spot are barely necessary. In fact, the journalists readily abandoned their professional independence and espoused the outlook of the troops with whom they were embedded (Tumber 2004: 191-194). This chimes with Morrison's account of the egregious reasons why not a single reporter in the Falklands pursued apparently credible reports that British paratroops had bayoneted Argentinian troops who had already surrendered, a clear war crime if true (Morrison 1994: 315-316).[9]

Schudson describes such individuals who play such a role in the production of news: 'Journalists face a vast world of *parajournalists*, we might call them — public relations firms, public information officers, political spin doctors, and the publicity staffs of a wide variety of institutions, both corporate and nonprofit' (2003: 3). In this formulation, parajournalists are essentially the opposite of watchdogs speaking truth to power. They are the source spokespersons and similar organisational representatives who frequently do essential 'signwork' for journalists (Manning 1986), by constructing press releases which are nothing more than pre-digested, already-edited, news reports. Official military media managers and the sources who work as news producers for reporters — parajournalists — are thus mirror images of each other. Reporters use officials for their own purposes, and in turn officials use reporters. Again, this echoes Gans's description of the 'tug-of-war' between reporters and sources over who controls the meaning of news texts. He writes: 'while sources attempt to "manage" the news, putting the best light on themselves, journalists concurrently "manage" the sources in order to extract the information they want' (Gans 1979: 117). The *quid pro quo* for reporters using such source intermediaries is that powerful source entities such as media management officials also use reporters to transmit their own propaganda messages. As an example, Hatcher has employed Schudson's parajournalist term to examine how an actual news event was sourced, using it to describe anonymous expatriate Iraqi politicians living in the US who helped persuade the US government to invade Iraq in 2003 (Hatcher 2010). They were activists who successfully influenced the key policy-makers in Washington who were looking for reasons to invade.

The preceding review of the literature suggests that a fruitful line of enquiry into the nature of such 'parajournalists' could also be to highlight the ways in which the work practices of staff reporters' former sources have begun to resemble those of professional journalists, either on their own initiative or as a result of assisting reporters in their work. This definition of parajournalists is how I will refer to them throughout the thesis. The informal contribution made by unofficial sources, non-journalists and other source intermediaries in the field who contribute to war reporters' news texts is under-theorised. I am calling these individuals parajournalists in order to indicate a wider point. Namely, reporters in the field

[9] It is interesting to consider how these British soldiers might have been influenced by their predecessors' culture and practices dating from World War Two. In his book *The Battle of Arnhem* (2018), Beevor makes it clear that during this 1944 battle it was standard practice for British troops from the Parachute Regiment to kill prisoners who had surrendered (see pp. 215-216, 332).

have always had a powerful interest in minimising the contribution others make to their news gathering. In the following chapter I will note how theories about interpretive communities can help to describe the informal sourcing networks used by reporters in the field, and how such collaborations affect how foreign news is verified.

1.6. Chapter summary: Introduction/Literature Review

This review of the literature on the past and present of the sourcing of news in the field finds, firstly, that the figure of the war reporter has been heavily promoted by news providers since the beginning of war reporting in the nineteenth century, primarily as a marketing device. Second, that strict official news management of journalists in the field has been a constant feature throughout almost the whole history of war journalism. And finally, that contemporary war reporting is in crisis, the key feature here being a big increase in attacks on journalists in areas of conflict in the years since 9/11. This is explained in the literature by the fact that a diverse group of actors in areas of conflict, who are war reporters' former sources, have been empowered by the ready availability of digital networks so they no longer need the help of journalists to publish their own news. In the following chapter I examine relevant theories that help explain these developments and begin to explore how they might change our understanding of news sourcing.

2. Conceptual Framework

The previous review of the literature on the management of foreign reporters in the field concluded that the current crisis of conflict reporting is essentially a sourcing problem. That is, an increase in attacks on journalists has come about because journalists' former sources no longer need rely on them to get their messages out. Sources can now publish their own news online, primarily on social media. In this chapter, I construct a theoretical framework which will enable me to explore the topic.

2.1. Walter Lippmann's theory of objectivity and the verification of facts

A hundred years ago the most influential American journalist of the day, Walter Lippmann, wrote a series of books examining why journalists had failed to report the main events of World War One accurately (Lippmann 1920, 1922, 1931, Lippmann, Liffmann and Merz 2007 [1920]). Lippmann framed his analysis as a crisis of democracy, which went along with a failure of journalism to verify the facts about important disputed events. Three years after the Russian revolution, a news event of clear historical importance, Lippmann examined how it had been covered by the *New York Times,* since it was supposedly 'one of the really great newspapers of the world' (Lippmann, Liffmann and Merz 2007 [1920]: 155). He found that its reports about the revolution and its aftermath were 'almost always misleading' (Lippmann, Liffmann and Merz: 2007 [1920]: 158). 'The analysis shows how seriously misled was the *Times* by its reliance upon the official purveyors of information [. . .] They indicate opinion, they are controlled by special purpose and they are not trustworthy news,' wrote Lippmann (Lippmann, Liffmann and Merz 2007 [1920]: 171). He wrote that the chronic structural problem which had resulted in the poor coverage was the lack of transparency about the identity of the reporters' sources:

> '[T]he official statement purporting to be a statement of fact is the semi-official and semi-authoritative but anonymous statement [. . .] Beyond those phrases may be anybody, a minor bureaucrat, a dinner table conversation, hotel lobby gossip, a chance acquaintance, a paid agent' (Lippmann, Liffmann and Merz 2007 [1920]: 171).

Lippmann advocated that journalism should recreate itself as a discipline of the transparent verification of facts. In the years that followed, he appealed for journalists to systematically apply the scientific verification of facts to the sourcing of news texts, calling this method 'objectivity' (Lippmann 1931). To be objective Lippmann wrote, was to transparently verify what sources say, without adding distorting information. He pointed to numerous mistaken reports which announcing Lenin's death:

> ‘There is no defence, no extenuation, no excuse whatsoever, for stating six times that Lenin is dead when the only information the paper possesses is a report the death from a source [that has] repeatedly [been] shown to be unreliable. The news, in that instance, is not that “Lenin is dead” but “Helsingfors [Swedish for Helsinki, i.e., the authorities in Finland] says Lenin is dead”’ (Lippmann 1922: 226).

Within the academy, scholars took a completely different approach in a series of studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, which became foundation texts for the academic understanding of how news journalists source their reports.

2.2. Social science texts on sourcing: ‘news ethnographies’

The first scholarly studies of news sourcing conceptualised the editors who selected some news events and not others from a flow of information entering the newsroom, as ‘gatekeepers’, seemingly the key determinant in news production (White 1950). This conception was later criticised by Schudson as ‘handy’ but simplistic: ‘It tries to fix news-making at one point along a circuit of interactions and does not examine the circuit as a whole’ (2000: 177). Nearly 50 years ago, a series of studies by media sociologists conceived of news stories in a more holistic way: namely as an enterprise jointly constructed by journalists and their sources (Sigal 1973; Tuchman 1972, 1973, 1978; Fishman 1980, Gans 1979). Over time, they have become the cornerstone of much basic media sociology. These studies identified the sourcing of news as the key to understanding how journalism works and advocated that news is essentially determined by the power of sources to create it (Molotch and Lester 1974). Importantly, as will be outlined below, later academic work pointed out the limits of their scope, since they tended to examine the day-to-day, essentially bureaucratic, mechanisms by which domestic news was produced. What became seminal texts were institutional ethnographies focusing on the mechanisms by which news was gathered by reporters working for news organisations based in large cities in the US. More reductively, McNair has described a journalist as a ‘cog in the wheel over whose speed and direction he or she may have little or no control’ in the news gathering process (1998: 62). The work of ethnographers such as Gans was inspired by the post-war Chicago school which pioneered use of participant observation within sociology and had direct roots in journalism (Robson 2016: 328). Gans, Tuchman and Fishman all spent lengthy periods in the newsroom to gather data, using participant observation as a research strategy and methodology.[10] The basic approach was for researchers to spend long periods, interviewing reporters and editors about how they constructed their news reports. These researchers characterised the relationship in terms that stressed negotiation, compromise and the seeking of mutual benefit. Gans, for example, conceived relationships between reporters and their sources as a dance or — in more adversarial terms — ‘tugs-of-war’ (1979: 117).

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[10] Robson writes: ‘The big difference between the researcher and the journalist [. . .] is that the researcher has to go beyond the story. This next stage involves developing a set of concepts, a theoretical framework, properly grounded in the detail of the story, which helps you to understand, and explain to others, what is going on’ (2016: 328). I return to participant observation in the methodology chapter, following.

Scholars of reporter-source relations based so much of their work on the texts from the 1970s and 1980s mentioned above that they can be considered classics — in the sense they constitute ‘a number of key works that help define and shape research’ in every field of social study’ (Reese and Ballinger 2001: 641). Such studies found that, whatever journalists may think, as a rule reporters were dominated by their sources and that official sources were more powerful than journalists. As Sigal put it: ‘News is not what happens, but what someone says has happened or will happen’ (1986: 15). Numerous subsequent academic studies have essentially come to the same conclusion: that elite and other official sources are reporters’ most important sources, including politicians and bureaucrats, and they are in charge (Fishman 1980: 51). The principal reason journalists prefer official over unofficial accounts is because official claims are more easily verifiable than unofficial ones (Tuchman 1978). Tuchman’s article, ‘Objectivity as Strategic Ritual’ (1972) identified the way journalists attributed facts in news texts to specific sources as a rhetorical device that allowed a journalist to side-step their responsibility to evaluate the truthfulness or otherwise of the information that the source had supplied. Her study conceived of sourcing primarily as a defensive strategy to relieve journalists of the responsibility for coming down on one side or the other in an argument about facts. ‘Because of the diverse pressures to which the newsman is subject, he feels that he must be able to protect himself, to state, “I am an objective professional,”’ wrote Tuchman (1972: 675).

2.2.1. Social constructionism and ‘objectivity’

Soloski explicitly links news sourcing as a bureaucratic routine to the concept of objectivity as an ideology: ‘Objectivity is the most important professional norm, and from it flows more specific aspects of news professionalism such as news judgment, the selection of sources and the structure of news beats,’ he writes (1989: 213). The sociologist Stuart Hall, an influential critic of journalism, wrote that reporters stand in ‘structured subordination’ to official sources who are the ‘primary definers’ (Hall et al. 2013 [1978]: 59). Chibnall similarly claimed that elite sources and journalists’ share fundamentally similar news values (Chibnall 1977), and Hall argued that bureaucratic sourcing mechanisms ‘unwittingly, unconsciously’ serve ‘as a support for the reproduction of a dominant ideological discursive field’ (1982: 88). However Cottle has written that the most serious limitation of such studies is they ‘fail to examine the complexities and interactions informing the professional and organizational worlds of news production and news sources’ (Cottle 2000a: 432). Meanwhile, already in 1990, Schlesinger found the primary definer model reductive, writing that it ‘tends to reduce all to a uniform variation on a theme’ (p. 68).

Whether journalists can ever really adhere to their stated professional standards in order to report objective truth and, indeed, whether objective truth exists at all, has been hotly contested within the academy for decades. Chalaby defines objectivity as the ‘bundle of discursive norms, such as impartiality, neutrality or factuality’ that began to emerge in the latter part of the nineteenth century in the US and UK which define the practice of modern journalism’ (Chalaby 1998: 5). It is the supposedly scientific mechanism by which journalists are supposed to uncover the truth about current events (Rupar 2006a). Feminist (Zalk and Gordon-Kelter 1992: 5-6), Marxist (Resnick and Wolff 1987: 8) and postmodern scholars (Mohanty 1997: 149-197), have all questioned whether objective truth, in the sense of discoverable, verifiable facts, exists. Even the answers to apparently simple questions about how and when objectivity in journalism developed and for whose purpose (Schudson 1978, Knowlton and Freeman 2005: 3) are disputed.

2.2.2. Social constructionism and 'facts'

Scholars have long attempted to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory conceptual frameworks. On the one hand, that the sourcing of news is socially constructed. On the other, acknowledging that facts exist, are discoverable and can therefore be verified. According to Schudson: '[T]here are events in the world we can shape, distort, reinterpret, but not fundamentally change. President Kennedy was killed by an assassin. There are lots of ways to read this fact, but none of them restore John F. Kennedy to life. He really died' (2008: 92). Meanwhile in a journal article entitled, 'Reality without scare quotes', Wright, meanwhile, argues for a more inclusive approach. '[S]cholars of journalism need not quail at the idea of speaking (or writing) about real objects, systems and experiences, as well as about the social constructions which involve them' (2011: 159-160). She notes that this is why former journalists such as herself have tried to reconcile these ways of thinking about how journalists view 'facts'. Hanitzsch et al. found that practitioners of journalism have a much less problematic view of the existence of facts and how they are verified. In a study of reporters in 18 countries they write: 'Reliability and factual information [. . .] appear to be equally important to journalists around the globe' (2012: 492).

In an important study examining the purpose and practice of contemporary journalism, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) identify a misunderstanding about the nature of objectivity as a principal reason for this conceptual gap between journalists and scholars of journalism. According to them, a technique originally designed to verify facts and hold journalists to account has instead been mistakenly elevated to become the aim of journalism. It is precisely because journalists are biased, they write, that the original meaning of objectivity intended by its creator, Lippmann — as a tool to verify facts — has been 'lost' and needs to be reinstated (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014: 101). None of the standard scholarly texts already noted on the negotiations journalists conduct with their sources assert that they are anything but complex. However, recent studies by communications scholars have drawn attention to a rapidly changing culture of news gathering in the field (Allan and Peters 2015, Lanoszka 2019, Carson and Farhall 2018). Meanwhile Rupar identifies a chronic lack of clarity over how news reports are sourced (2006b). According to Franklin and Carlson this is why news consumers increasingly doubt their authenticity (2011: 52-59). A fundamental aspect of transparency in journalism is publishing the name of the person who wrote a news story. This is a practice which has developed over time. Reporter bylines in news reports took a long time to become established, but are now routine (Culbertson and Somerick 1976, Nerone and Barnhurst 2003, Reich 2010). Hellmueller, Vos and Poepsel have promoted transparent sourcing as a key advantage of reporters working with digital networks, which is updating journalism in the twenty-first century. They identify a 'normative shift from objectivity toward a transparency-oriented journalistic field' (Hellmueller, Vos and Poepsel 2013: 287). The next section examines how more recent ethnographies of news explore the sourcing practices of reporters who use digital networks.

2.2.3. The second and third waves of news ethnographies

In a widely-cited journal article published in 2000, Cottle appealed for a 'second wave' (Cottle 2000b) of news ethnographies in order to update the studies by Tuchman and the original news ethnographers, complaining of their limited applicability based as they were on studies of routine news gathering in large American cities. However, ethnographic studies located within newsrooms continue to be a popular way for scholars to explore sourcing (among many examples, see Ryfe 2009, 2012, Usher 2014). A main reason, already noted, is that newsrooms are the most manageable areas in which to conduct academic studies, not least because this is the most convenient place to directly observe how editors and reporters interact. However, Zelizer writes that the continued influence of the classic news ethnographies of 1970s and 1980s sourcing is puzzling since they appear to be of universal applicability, yet are in fact of questionable generalisability (2004: 69). Cottle's solution was to advocate the use of participant observation in multiple sites where news gathering occurs. He points out:

> '[N]ewsrooms have always been 'networked' in the sense of being plugged into incoming sources of news [. . .] engaging in relations of mutual benefit with competitor colleagues [. . .] and monitoring avidly the wider outpouring of news from different news outlets as well as communicating with their journalists in distant locations' (2007: 9).

Paterson and Domingo presented their two-volume edited collection *Making Online News* (Paterson and Domingo 2008, Domingo and Paterson 2011), as what they termed a 'third wave' of news ethnographies (Domingo 2008: 28. See footnote on that page). Recent scholarship points to the opportunities offered by contemporary highly networked digital news 'ecosystems' (Anderson 2016: 410-423). Notable in these studies is one by Robinson examining the contribution made by members of the public to the news gathering processes within one US news organisation which was transitioning to becoming an online product, in a monograph entitled *Journalism as Process* (Robinson 2011). In it, she explores 'the empirical and theoretical ramifications of journalism as social media, specifically 'journalism as process,' calling for 'an end to thinking about news as a discrete product and the beginning of considering news production as a shared, distributed action with multiple authors' (Robinson 2011: 138). Other digital news ethnographies in this wave included a study by Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen and Wardle (2011) which deployed a team of researchers tracking how audience-generated news material from foreign and domestic crises, including in areas of conflict, is processed within BBC newsrooms. They found that 'audience material is firmly embedded within the long-standing routines of traditional journalism practice' (Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen and Wardle 2011: 85). Two monographs by Anderson (2011, 2013) addressed this shortcoming by making the case for examining the roles played by actors outside them in the wider digital news 'ecosystem'. Wahl-Jorgensen comments:

> 'This term captures the complexities of newsmaking in the era of digitisation and convergence, where news production can no longer be understood as concentrated in the

material space of the newsroom and carried out by specialized professionals, but rather as a radically diverse and dispersed set of activities involving a broad range of organizations, groups, and individuals in many places and on varied platforms' (2014: 1125).

Anderson writes that he aimed to 'widen our analytical lens' (2013: 169) by his use of actor network theory (ANT), which assigns a degree of agency to non-human so-called 'actants' (Latour 2005: 63-86), including the technological components involved in news gathering (Anderson 2013: 172-175). A claimed benefit of using ANT as a conceptual approach is that it envisions news production not as a discrete, finished product but as an assemblage of networks (De Landa 2006). Anderson distinguishes second-level news workers, who are various kinds of aggregators working both within and outside the newsroom. He defines them as 'hierarchizers, inter-linkers, bundlers, and illustrators of web content' (Anderson, 2013: 70).

2.3. War reporters' informal source networks as interpretive communities

The literature therefore points to an even more precise research opportunity. That is, to investigate the ways by which professional war reporters in the field have verified non-routine news events using informal sourcing networks throughout the history of war reporting. The history of journalism has mostly been presented by professional reporters. Morrison and Tumber write: 'Most of the literature [. . .] consists of the trade, in the beloved tradition of journalism, writing about itself' (1985: 445). Carey argued that a fresh look at the cultural history of journalism as a practice is needed, which is why it is important to address the relationship between media history and cultural history. He wrote: 'Our failure to develop the cultural history of journalism has led us to exclude from our literature any serious attention to what I believe is the central historical story we have to tell, namely the history of reporting' (Carey 1974: 4). The challenge, then, is how to describe ethnographically and culturally the novel relationships between a greatly increased number of actors involved in modern foreign news production – and place contemporary sourcing practices in their true historical context. Cottle writes:

> 'Today's complexly structured news field is inhabited by differentiated "tribes" of journalists. The would-be ethnographer may thus find it difficult to make contact and "go native" with the journalist tribe and is likely to generate different views into the nature of news production and culture depending on which encampment is visited' (2000b: 23).

A fruitful way of theorising the essentially collaborative work practices of journalists, sources and parajournalists as they work together on location is to extend Zelizer's concept of a group of journalists who comprise an interpretive community (Zelizer 1993), to examine the novel work practices embedded in and emerging from the existing culture of reporting. Zelizer notes that a significantly under-researched feature of contemporary war reporting is 'the little discussed backdrop to journalistic activity [in the field] such as work with sources and source intermediaries in 'grassroots information relays [or] informal networking' (2017: 201). For the purposes of the current thesis, these are the activities of sources-as-news-producers, which for the purposes of this thesis is another way of conceptualising parajournalists.

The concept of an 'interpretive community' which has emerged from anthropology and folklore studies is defined by Berkowitz and TerKeurst as 'a cultural site where meanings are constructed, shared, and reconstructed by members of social groups in the course of everyday life' (1999: 125). Scholars have applied the interpretive community frame to a variety of situations. In the field of ethnolinguistics, Hymes writes of ethnically distinct 'speech groups' united by their shared interpretation of reality (1980: 1-18). According to Fish, interpretive communities produce texts and 'determine the shape of what is read' (1980: 171). Likewise, Bellah et al. highlight groups who create shared interpretations of their activities over time in what they call 'communities of memory' (1985: 152). They add: 'In order not to forget [their] past, [such groups become] involved in retelling [. . .] constitutive narratives [offering] examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community' (Bellah et al. 1985: 153). This is a good description of the way war reporters talk about their activities. Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, William Russell's successors within the war reporter tribe consider themselves a distinct group within the larger journalistic community and war reporters and their employers alike have long promoted and marketed their autonomy and agency.

However, as already noted, contemporary war reporting is in a state of flux. The limits of the usefulness of considering journalism solely through a lens examining only them as professionals has already been noted (Anderson 2011). But conceptualising reporters as perfect professional actors fails to capture what happens on the margins in the field in foreign news. Using interpretive communities as a lens can help examine the ways in which modern sources actually behave, rather than demonstrating how reporters fit into the dominant paradigm of official sources as primary definers. In war reporting, official sources are those conducting news management: in the case of the UK embedded schemes this means the minders and media operations officials supplied by the Ministry of Defence. Meyers and Davidson write: 'Journalistic professionalism as an ideal and as a practice continues to be relevant, but it is understood and practiced differently by journalists and others "committing acts of journalism"' (2016: 427). Zelizer writes that examining journalists as an interpretive community suggests 'an [. . .] analytic focus on journalists and journalism practice' (1992: 9). This could be a way in to understanding the culture of journalist sourcing in the field in foreign news. 'The lens of culture facilitates the examination of facets of journalism that go under the radar of conventional prisms,' writes Zelizer (2017: 211).

2.4. Knowledge gap identified

As already discussed, journalists' sourcing practices in the field are far less studied than those in the newsroom. Furthermore, it is unclear how theories based on routine news gathering help when analysing coverage of unexpected events. Communications scholars acknowledge that studying sourcing in the field is a much more difficult proposition than in a newsroom. ‘We are [. . .] left floundering for precise answers once leaving the comfort of a single home base for study,’ writes Berkowitz (2009: 107). In any case, throughout the history of war reporting, reporters who were not actually present at the events they describe have relied heavily on eye-witnesses who were. Williams points out: ‘Eyewitness accounts are rarely produced by reporters. They rely on what people who purport to have been there tell them’ (2012: 349). The main component of battlefield reports is what the former BBC reporter Robert Fox calls a ‘mixture of eyewitness, and anecdotal report at one remove’ (2003: 6). For the researcher, as for a journalist, waiting around in a war zone for something to happen takes a great deal of time. It is telling that this is not mentioned more often in the literature.[11]

A contemporary ethnographic study exploring the contribution made by parajournalists to foreign news reporters’ informal source networks, set against equivalent practices of the past, would make a contribution by understanding the historical roots of contemporary foreign news production practices. Such a study would nonetheless start from a place of acknowledging the centrality of professional foreign correspondents. New actors, while making an important contribution, rarely play a central role in daily foreign news gathering. Lindner, Connell and Meyer note that professional journalists working for the so-called ‘legacy’ news providers remain at the top of the news hierarchy (2015: 553). Sambrook also notes the persistence of the model whereby professional reporters working for established news organisations remain the most trusted conduit for the verification of news in the digital era:

> ‘[N]ews organisations would argue that much of their audience still believes in their brand and legitimate role as interpreters of the day’s events. Further, they would defend their choice of interviewees as those with power, those who are accountable and those with proven credibility or expertise’ (Sambrook 2015: 136).

The research opportunity is, therefore, to clarify what has changed and what has stayed the same in foreign news sourcing practices in the digital era. The literature suggests that exploring how this happens would reveal something new about the trade-offs required by reporters, source intermediaries and sources in their interactions in the field. For all these reasons, in an era of ‘fake news’, this knowledge gap is relevant to a number of debates about the purpose of journalism. This all points to the potential for thinking about digital news gathering and war correspondence in a more holistic, inclusive way, specifically by considering what has really changed in the actual, lived practice of foreign reporting as a collaborative, shared endeavour examining the different actors in more widely dispersed so-called digital news ‘ecosystems’ (Pew Research Center 2010). Williams writes that over the course of the history of journalism unofficial sources tend to leave fewer accounts than official sources (2012: 352). Debates about a claimed crisis in foreign news gathering also beg the question of how different the current situation is from what has gone before.

[11] Probably because scholars who have not been war reporters do not know.

2.5. Chapter summary: Conceptual Framework

The claimed demise of the traditional foreign correspondent therefore provides a clear opportunity to define the terrain to explore in this thesis. That is, what are the informal mechanisms by which reporters in the past have sourced their news stories, and compare them with how contemporary reporters source stories now. A study conceived like this would examine how professional staff journalists have socially constructed meaning using their informal source networks, including all kinds of adjunct newsgatherers and non-professional 'parajournalists'. As noted, the constructionist studies from the 1970s and 1980s are out of date and their findings have been over-generalised. Meanwhile, foreign news gathering in areas of conflict is changing so rapidly that contemporary sourcing practices are only beginning to be described and put into their true historical context. This is important because, as already noted, scholars have identified that the historical basis of journalistic practice is often missing from contemporary studies of reporting culture in the field. In this thesis I will, therefore, address what has changed and what has stayed the same in war reporters' sourcing practices in the field. The challenge is to devise a historical survey which examines how reporters and sources have used each other and set each other to work, focusing on how war reporters' informal social networks have transparently verified news in the field throughout the history of war reporting. In the following chapter I lay out the method by which I will do this.

3. Methodology

The previous review of the literature highlighted a clear research opportunity. That is, to explore how reporters in the past sourced non-routine news in the field in areas of conflict and by doing so verify disputed events, the ways in which they do so now and by comparing them, to assess what has changed. Loosen and Schmidt write that the only feasible way to study digital news gathering is to use a flexible research design (Loosen and Schmidt 2016) and multiple research tools (Schatz 2009: 6). Robinson and Metzler write that such an approach provides ‘wonderful and significant research opportunities’ (2016: 447). In this chapter, I identify previous ways scholars have used to examine this area, outlining the key concepts, theories and models that inform, shape and frame the research approach.

The obvious difficulties entailed in navigating a vast quantity of data produced by actors who are widely dispersed through time and space are spatial and temporal. In this study the ‘thinking tools’ (Wacquant 1989: 50) I will use are media history, case studies, ethnography and a reflexive ethical element. This is designed to put contemporary foreign news gathering in the field in its historical context. I will also employ media history in historical case studies. My approach is oriented towards practice, and I am studying journalistic activity as a process rather than its end-product. My final methodological innovation is conceptual. That is, to reinstate journalistic objectivity in Lippmann’s original ‘lost’ meaning, simply as a discipline of the verification of facts and nothing else. This approach, which explores how ‘facts’ objectively occurring in the world are verified in news texts, might imply that my study comes from a realist perspective. However, I have anchored my methodology in a social constructivist outlook in order to allow me to analyse the social mechanisms by which facts are verified in informal sourcing networks. Next, I map the research questions onto the chapter structure.

3.1. Research questions, mapped onto chapter structure

1. How in the past did war reporters source news in the field, and why?
2. In what ways is foreign news now being sourced?
3. What has changed in war reporters’ sourcing and why?

I consider the first research question in a series of case studies sequenced chronologically over study chapters 3 and 4, entitled respectively ‘Newspaper Cases’ and ‘Broadcast cases’. These examine the sourcing mechanisms of conflict reporters of the past, which I am defining as the period before the adoption of social media.

Chapter 3, ‘Newspaper cases’ examines the work of newspaper reporters working during the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871); at the military campaign in Gallipoli (1915-1916); the civil war in Spain (1936-1939); and the only domestic British example, taken from the reporting at the start of the London Blitz in 1940, of *Daily Herald* reporter Ritchie Calder who wrote that reporters based in Fleet Street were only a short bus ride away from the ‘biggest story which British journalists have ever had presented to them’ (Calder 1941a: 75).

Chapter 4, ‘Broadcast Cases’ explores the work of three television reporters in the period at the end of what Hallin called the ‘high modern’ area, before social media and digital networks began to be used in news gathering (Hallin 1992). The reporters in this chapter are from the First Gulf War (1990-1991); Afghanistan at the start of the British deployment in 2006; and the Russo-Georgian war of 2008.

I then address research question 2 in study chapters 5-7, which I have adapted from my published fieldwork in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. Each of these fieldwork study chapter explores ethnographically the ways in which news was being gathered by a journalist in one of these contemporary conflict reporting ‘ecosystems’.

Chapter 5, ‘Iraq fieldwork’ introduces the concept of outsourcing of contemporary news gathering. It examines the work of Neil Arun, an international journalist working for the non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), and the contribution to his reporting made by a network of professional and non-professional newsgatherers in order to reduce the risk for participants (published as Pendry 2011).

Chapter 6, ‘Syria fieldwork’ is based on research I undertook on the Syrian border in 2013 when numerous journalists were being kidnapped just over the border inside Syria (published as Pendry 2015). The reporter here is Chris Chivers, of the *New York Times*, who worked with a then little-known weapons blogger in the UK, Eliot Higgins. The chapter explores why staff reporters and news organisations outsourced risk to a variety of non-professional newsgatherers after attacks on journalists in that country.

Chapter 7, ‘Ukraine fieldwork’ incorporates research conducted after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and focuses on a collaborative investigation jointly run by the erstwhile *Vice News* reporter, Simon Ostrovsky, and Eliot Higgins’s collective of volunteer online investigators Bellingcat (published as Pendry 2017).

Finally, in the Discussion **Chapter 8,** I answer the third, and most important, research question by comparing how foreign news was sourced in the past and how it is currently sourced, outlining the various methodological and theoretical contributions made by this research.

3.2. Media History

As outlined in the chapter plan above, chapter 3 uses media history to address the first research question, identifying continuities and discontinuities over time in the sourcing practices of four newspaper reporters in conflicts between 1870 and 1945. In chapter 3, I aim to explore how reporters worked with parajournalists in informal source networks of the past. Clearly to answer my research questions, I must use media history. Not only does history 'provide over-time observations' (Katz 2009: xvii), but it puts journalism practice in its true context (Zelizer 2004: 81). Williams has examined the colonial roots of foreign correspondence in his book, *International Journalism* (2011: 45-68), and McLaughlin has surveyed the changing technologies used in foreign correspondence (2016: 63-89) and the history of media management by the military (2016: 93-158). Along these lines, Zelizer comments that the study of the news remains 'fundamentally ahistoric' (2017: 247), while Anderson argues that history is under-used as a method for testing communication theory (2016: 412). Meanwhile Hardt and Brennen argue that the academic study of journalism practice has been characterised by the 'absence of history, linked to an absence of self-reflection, [that] reinforces the status-quo of theory and practice as ahistorical and acritical' (1993: 130). Williams writes that analysing culture in a documentary sense is primarily a methodological problem: in other words, how to piece together the fragmented remaining elements of the past. 'The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period, is this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular time and place: a sense of the ways in which the particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living' (2011 [1961]: 68). How to do this is not obvious. Zelizer writes that journalism history is considered 'something of a second-class citizen' within the academy (2004: 88). Schudson argues journalism history needs to pose larger questions than 'what has happened in the past in this noble profession' (1997a: 474). Meanwhile, the US historian Nerone complains that the historical study of journalism is essentially atheoretical and many historians have traditionally been hostile to the use of theory. Historians, he writes, view themselves merely 'as blue-collar workers who mine archives and craft narratives' (Nerone 1993: 148). Nevins criticises journalism history thus: 'Taken as a whole, it is deplorably uncritical and some of it is dishonest' (1959: 418). As already noted, one of my aims is to consider journalism as a process as well as a product. In doing so, I hope to explain what some of the mechanisms by which reporters verify disputed facts in areas of conflict are, and why they matter. This is, therefore, how I have defined the boundary in this thesis between cultural history (the uses of journalism's end-products) and everyday working practices. In chapters 3 and 4 I extract data from historical cases in order to understand how parajournalists contribute to the verification of facts in the news reports of professional journalists. In each case, I search primary and secondary sources in the literature for evidence of the contribution made by parajournalists to professional reporters' informal source networks and to understand why it matters. One of the methodological innovations I have devised for the purpose of this thesis is that I am applying some theoretical concepts taken from communication studies to historical cases.

3.2.1. How I am using objectivity

In this research I am using objectivity as a method to analyse data in my study chapters: simply, how the facts in the news stories in the cases were verified and to what extent the process was visible, or transparent. In this thesis I will use the term 'objectivity' to signify the methodological tool journalists use to verify facts and construct their reports, as outlined below. Morrison and Tumber echo this description of 'objectivity not as a state, but as a procedure' (1988: 127). In his book *News Values*, the American journalist Jack Fuller writes that reporters need to show ‘modesty in their judgements about the limits of their knowledge: what they know and what they do not’ (1996: 350). I am using objectivity here to describe how well reporters adhere to their stated professional commitment to transparently verify facts, which Lippmann considered to be the sole purpose of journalism (Lippmann 1920, 1921, 1931). Thus, my method to examine the verification of facts adheres closely to the narrow sense of being transparently objective as originally defined by Lippmann. The journalist Michael Oreskes notes that the key point is for reporters to ‘do their own work’ (cited in Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014: 122). Rosen writes that objectivity is a ‘view from nowhere’ (2010), if it means the journalist positioning him- or herself at the middle point of a range of views that he or she has laid out. In the field of journalism, Eric Newton, an adviser to the Knight Foundation, a US journalism and communities think-tank, writes:

> ‘There’s too much debate about whether a person can be neutral and not enough focus on whether a tool or method can be. Whether someone is acting journalistically depends on what people do, not so much on who they are. Anyone can perform an act of journalism. The definition is situational, not occupational. Let’s apply this to a basic-yet-often-ignored journalistic task: counting a crowd. An event’s backers say 500,000 people were there at the peak. An aerial photograph, divided into grids and analyzed, estimates only about 80,000 were there. It no longer works to say, “We have no bias; we counted. Trust us.” In social media the partisans simply shout, “You lie!” Today, the journalistic action is to show one’s work. We should publish the photo online, explain the crowd-counting method and let people check what we did themselves. See, folks? The crowd is what it is, no matter what your personal beliefs. That’s being *transparently objective* [note: italics are in the original]’ (Goodman 2014).

It is also more empirical, since the workings of the sourcing can be checked by others.

3.2.2. How I am using social constructionism

In the literature review I made the case for the virtue of adopting a method situated between pure realism and, at the other extreme, pure social construction. Such an approach would recognise both that facts exist; and that the way they are verified can be studied by taking into account the social constructed interactions between the actors. Gauthier describes exactly the conceptual approach I am using:

> ‘The realist theory proposed here is not to say that the world viewed by news journalism (which is essentially a social world) is a given. On the contrary, this realism readily admits that journalistic reality, and more importantly, social reality, are constructed realities. This perspective simply attempts to demonstrate how this construction depends on a reality that is not constructed’ (2005: 59).

In the way I am applying my method, facts inescapably do exist and it is out of these actually occurring events that we build our social reality. Thus the social world exists too. Searle notes: ‘[T]here has to be something for the construction to be constructed out of' (1995: 190). This is also how Morrison explained the reporting of war as a social construction:

> 'For the historian, who might use media accounts of events to construct his account of history, it is well to know the social dynamics at work on the journalist in the construction of their reports. For the student of the mass media, on the other hand, it is well that the acceptance of news as a social construction goes much deeper [. . .] than is usually implied. Social construction ought to be seen as relating to the very essence of how the world is given meaning and thus sense. In other words we must recognise basic anthropological facts about what it is to live in the world. And it is this living in the world, the manner in which we do it, that has massive repercussion for how it is represented in the accounts we give of it' (1994: 320).

My method is, therefore, designed to show the workings of foreign news sourcing in its human dimension.

3.2.3.Section summary

This section has described my own adaptation of media history as one of the tools with which I answer research question 1. It explains how I am using media history in conjunction with my own definition of objectivity and social constructionism, and my use of Schudson's *parajournalist* term in order to do this.

3.3. Case studies

This is the other feature I am using to answer Research Question 1. In study chapters 3 and 4 I will use case studies to explore the sourcing practices of conflict reporters from the past. This is a method that allows that close attention to detail and process, and is a commonly employed strategy in a range of social science research disciplines (Stake 1995, Yin 2009).

3.3.1. The use of cases to explore the culture of sourcing in the field

Yin defines research by case study as an empirical enquiry that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (2009: 18). For these reasons case studies are a suitable way to explore in what ways informal source networks, operating alongside official news management processes, contribute to published news texts. The thesis is a multiple (Yin 2009: 19), longitudinal case study (Mitchell 2006). It is diachronic: i.e. it demonstrates change over time (Thomas 2011: 517). The plurality of observations allows me to compare data across the cases (Friedrichs and Lüdtke 1975: 20). In Thomas's schemata for the organisation of research by case study, the boundaries of the case histories are the initial consideration by which they are chosen (2011: 512).

3.3.2. Temporal case boundaries

The temporal boundaries of the cases come from new technologies, a way of organising the representation of the past which in my field is common in historical accounts. For the purpose of this thesis 'the past' which is covered in study chapters 3 and 4 ends in 2010.

This is approximately the point by which the literature on the use of digital social networks, including Twitter, agrees that they became ubiquitous in news gathering. I have settled on the exact date by splitting the difference between the two major events scholars have used to distinguish a claimed important new role for digital networks in news. These are the inception of the 'Twitterverse' in the popular uprising in Iran of June 2009 (Morozov 2011: 66), and the start of the Arab Spring in early 2011, as defined by Joseph (2012: 157-167).

3.3.3. Selection of cases

I chose the cases in chapters 3 and 4 using the following criteria. First, they needed to be case studies in which the journalist has left extensive evidence regarding his or her use of sources. Secondly, there needed to be sufficient primary material (principally biographies, memoirs and archive material) to infer how the journalist worked with their sources. An advantage of using media history as a research strategy is that the passage of time tends to settle outstanding scholarly disputes about the course of events. Historians often have the 20:20 vision and (sometimes) a 360-degree perspective that contemporary reports may lack. Finally, it is worth also noting that not seek out examples of journalists' dishonesty or otherwise faulty news gathering practices but where I have found instances of problematic sourcing by any of the reporters, that obviously forms part of the discussion.

3.3.4. Generalisation and typicality

The population of the 'historical' case studies in this thesis consists of four from the newspaper era (chapter 3) and three more recent broadcast cases in chapter 4. Across the thesis, I conducted a total of 115 semi-structured interviews with reporters, sources and parajournalists, all intended to examine how the process of sourcing contributed to the transparent verification of facts.[12] Some short interviews were designed to check a discrete fact. Fieldwork interviews with participants whom I directly observed, and who were in a position to illuminate more of the how and why of verification, tended to be longer. Research by case study has been criticised for a claimed lack of generalisability. However, this is to misunderstand its purpose, writes Simons:

> 'When choosing a case to study it is not necessary to seek one that is "typical" of other cases. This is something of a holy grail in a pure sense. Each case is unique so no one *is* typical of another — though there may be commonalities between cases on the assumption that this will have greater potential for transferability or provide a sounder basis for extrapolation of findings to other contexts. This is not necessarily the case' (2009: 30).

These cases are not, however, supposed to be 'typical', nor do they constitute a representative sample of a larger body of cases. Stake points out: 'Case study research is not sampling research [. . .] Sometimes a "typical" case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases [. . .] The first criterion should be to maximise what we can learn' (1995: 4). I will answer my research questions by connecting

[12] See Appendix 1 for details of the most important author interviews.

the specific features of the way the professional reporters in the cases worked with their sources to their historical, social and political contexts.

3.3.5. Section summary

This section explains how I have selected case studies drawn from 'the past' of war reporting for use in study chapters 3 and 4 in order to answer research question 1, and why cases are a suitable way of answering the research question.

3.4. Fieldwork

I answered research question 2 by the use of ethnographic fieldwork or participant observation in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine in study chapters 5, 6 and 7, respectively. Like the historical study chapters, these examine how a specific reporter worked with their sources in these contemporary conflicts. They also deal with a specific aspect of each reporting ecosystem at greater length. The scale of these fieldwork projects, time frames, the number and selection of interviewees and how the interviews were conducted, will all be detailed briefly in the individual chapters. Funding, planning and conducting the research in the field was time consuming, taking place over several years. The fieldwork was funded by grants awarded by my university between 2010 and 2015, designed to encourage the publication of original research.

3.4.1. Participant and non-participant observation

In Russell's own definition, the war reporters who came after him were his 'luckless tribe' (McLaughlin 2016: 1). Ethnography's parent disciplines being anthropology and sociology (Kubik 2009), anthropologists' original method to conduct their studies was for the researcher to spend long celibate periods living with a tribe (Punch 1986: 11). This makes ethnography (often described as 'participant observation') a particularly suitable method to write about how war reporters understand their own culture and their beliefs about the ways they work with the source entities around them. There are numerous possible ways in which this could be done, according to Gilbert (2008: 270).

Importantly, Denzin writes that participant observers and ethnographers 'write culture' (1989 [1970]: 156). He notes that the methods by which modern ethnography is practised are 'a curious blending of methodological techniques' (Denzin 1989 [1970]: 157) which may include:

> 'some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artefacts; and open-mindedness in the direction the study takes' (McCall and Simmons 1969: 1).

There is an assumption in much of literature on participant observation methods that the researcher is going to be an outsider to the group being studied. Friedrichs and Lüdtke write: 'Because he is a stranger, the participant observer must first win the trust of the actors' (1975: 31). However I published some of the material from my fieldwork in news outlets. Meanwhile, Jorgensen notes: 'The methodology of participant observation focuses on the meanings of human existence as seen from the standpoint of insiders' (1989: 14). In my method, the tribe of conflict reporters is my tribe, and by writing about it I describe my world. Writing this thesis as a former junior member of the tribe, I switch between participant and observer, insider and outsider. With the exception of the fieldwork in Iraq, when I was more closely involved in logistics for the research, my role can be characterised as a non-participant observer with an insider perspective.

3.4.3. My own positioning

This section is inspired by the field of autoethnography, in which the researcher is explicit about their point of view and thus 'owns' their own subjective approach (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010) and is why I have written the thesis in the first person. The thesis also provides a way for me to reflect on my own practice as a former conflict journalist and connect that to academic research into contemporary news gathering in areas of conflict. Between 1993 and 1998 I was a producer working with various agency camera operators under the umbrella of the London-based specialist conflict news agency Frontline News Television. Loyn (2005) has told our story.[13] Because I could speak Russian, I did most of my conflict reporting in Chechnya, also working in Afghanistan and the Congo. Essentially, we were a cooperative of freelances who found it convenient to market our work to international and domestic British broadcasters under a collective brand, in the same way that leading stills photographers created the Magnum agency. We also hired ourselves out as day labourers to our tribal elders, the senior staff correspondents. Frontline News camera operators pioneered the way of working which became known as 'video journalism' (Morgan 2008). In the late 1980s technology companies began to produce small, cheap, highly specified amateur video cameras for the consumer market. They became known as 'prosumer' cameras. That is, ones designed for consumers, but which were adopted by professional video journalists for discreet filming in difficult situations. 'Video journalists' would also work in small teams with the normal larger television cameras. The pictures from large, professional cameras were better quality and considered more suitable for news programmes, but cost tens of thousands of pounds. TV networks would run stories shot on the small cameras if the pictures were 'remarkable and unique' (Morgan 2008: 36). My erstwhile Frontline News colleague, Vaughan Smith, said this kind of journalism often sold itself on the basis of its authenticity:

> 'We had a vision of a slightly more democratic form of news [. . .] We thought a lot about ethics, more maybe than most journalists, because we got to know people and we felt a pressure to deliver, to tell their story, report their lives as we found it' (Morgan 2008: 54).

We Frontline News people did not spend much time in newsrooms, the sites of study favoured by scholars, usually only appearing in them when trying to sell material. Nor did we doubt about our place in the news hierarchy. I have met staff journalists with the same

[13] I am mentioned on pp. 274, 439.

derisive views about freelances as those ascribed by Michael Herr to reporters in Vietnam, who wrote that he and his fellow freelances in Vietnam were viewed by staff correspondents as 'thrill freaks, death-wishers, wound-seekers, war-lovers, hero-worshippers, closet queens, dope addicts, low-grade alcoholics, ghouls, communists [and] seditionists' (Herr 1978: 183). While waiting to sell footage to the American network CBS's news bureau in Moscow in the 1990s I heard a staff cameraman telling a reporter that there were two 'cowboys' outside with some footage. Anecdotally, the BBC news executive colleague of one of my supervisors used to refer to freelances who supplied material from places staff crews consider too dangerous to work in as 'useful idiots', because then staff people would not have to run a risk. Along these lines, the former BBC reporter Angus Roxburgh was a correspondent in the Moscow bureau during the first Chechen war in the 1990s. A passage in his memoir describes how he and his colleagues viewed freelance contributors who shot material used in reports:

> 'Russian freelancers, or stringers, [. . .] brought us their pictures to us from trouble spots. Their images were often brilliant, and obtained by putting their lives at risk — but we were horribly cynical about them when they would turn up at the BBC office, straight from a war zone, still covered in mud from some stinking trench. I don't know who coined the disgraceful phrase, but they became known as 'video smellies' — such is the callous banter of a BBC newsroom. A producer would come into my room and say, "Angus, there's a video smelly here. Do you want to come and see what he's got?" Once when a stringer overheard the remark he gave a puzzled look and the quick-witted producer explained: "It's what we call you — you know, *smely.*" *Smely* is Russian for brave and that's what they certainly were. Even when we ourselves were actually in a war zone, we would often incorporate stringers' pictures into our reports: they were (and presumably still are) the unnamed, unacknowledged heroes of some of the most striking BBC coverage' (Roxburgh 2017: 251).

Marketing ourselves through Frontline News, we worked either directly for a correspondent in the field, called 'crewing', or would alternatively sell material direct to the staff reporters on the ground or at the foreign news bureaux along with a guide 'voice-over'. These words would be recorded by us on a separate audio track which would be left out of the finished version when it was broadcast. Often I would also record a series of 'pieces to camera' or 'stand-ups' for distribution to regular clients (where a reporter speaks directly to the camera), with different sign-offs for a broadcaster who could plausibly claim they had someone on the spot. Roxburgh gave an example of some footage supplied by a freelance from his informal news gathering network:

> 'Later, in 1995, I did a report from Moscow about three old Russian women trapped in their home for days in war-torn Chechnya, afraid to go outside. One of the sisters had lost her mind from terror. They were confined to the bathroom of their ground-floor flat, the only room not yet destroyed, and hadn't eaten for five days. The pictures were superb, capturing the fear in the women's eyes, their flinches as bombs exploded nearby. My report was moving, and attracted favourable comment

> in the newsroom. But apart from the words, it wasn't mine. It was all a video smelly's work — his pictures, his interview, his initiative for finding the story in the first place' (Roxburgh 2017: 251).

In fact, the 'video smelly' cameraman in the old ladies' bathroom was my Frontline colleague Peter Jouvenal, and I was the producer who interviewed the *babushki*.[14] This conflict was my first experience of reporting conflict. I arrived in early January 1995, during the intense bombardment of Grozny by Russian forces. Over the following two years I made half a dozen reporting trips to the region, until foreign journalists began to be targeted for kidnap and murder. There are four key points about Roxburgh's description of the material on the old Russian women. Firstly, Frontline News freelances occupied an ambiguous place in the hierarchy. Some leading colleagues were well known and valued for their work in the news industry, but none of us got onscreen credit for our work. My colleague Vaughan Smith, who ran the agency, complained at an awards ceremony years later that his television pictures, often obtained at great personal risk, were always being voiced-over by a staff correspondent adding that he had more often been shot in the course of his work, than been credited onscreen by the BBC (cited in Luft 2008).[15] Secondly, it encapsulates why freelances do not view the world of news from the same perspective as a staff reporter. Roxburgh did not need to know more about the footage which had apparently had been supplied by an anonymous freelance out in the mud and filth, which he was evidently glad to avoid.[16] Third, though I was a fluent Russian speaker, in order to work in Grozny, described by the BBC reporter Jeremy Bowen who was working there at the time as 'the most violent, dangerous place I have ever been' (2007: 250), as usual I found it essential to hire fixers although, exceptionally, I happened not to have anyone helping me on the day we filmed the *babushki*. The final point is that we were living and working among the people, recording their suffering with no fear of being attacked or abducted by those around us. This can no longer to be assumed in contemporary areas of conflict. The former BBC Moscow correspondent, James Rodgers has described the 'open access reporting' (2012: 33) then pertaining in the Caucasus during 1994-1997. de Waal has written about the liberating effect for journalists of being able to report a war nearly free of news management:

> 'That first Chechen War was an astonishingly open one for journalists. We ran great risks, certainly, but such was the turmoil of the Russian state at the time that it was possible as a journalist to operate with immense freedom. There was no "frontline" as such, and you could cross whatever seemed like one with ease. I remember leaving Russian-controlled Grozny, traveling for an hour to a lazily manned checkpoint, passing through, and half an hour later sitting in a farmhouse doing an

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[14] Roxburgh's package is available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP7JIXoQ8wM [Online. Accessed 4 September 2020].

[16] The material had been brought back by me from Grozny to London, copied at the Frontline News office there, biked over to the BBC, which then fed it by satellite to the Moscow bureau for possible use by Roxburgh. There would have been a 'dope sheet' or shot list with a brief explanation of who was being filmed where, based on what I had told the office about the circumstances in which it had been recorded.

> interview with the "vice president of Ichkeria," the deputy leader of the warring rebels' (de Waal 2004).

In the first Chechen war, we knew we were lucky to be able to work without oppressive news management on the ground. But at the time I had little understanding of how extremely unusual in the history of war reporting this was.

A final point about my own positionality is that it is relevant that I am writing as a middle-aged, male when considering the sole case study in the thesis of a woman reporter, Virginia Cowles. I have noted my own awareness of this when discussing whether Cowles's sources deceived her in study Chapter 4. Inevitably, women war reporters have been on the receiving end of sexist assumptions about their abilities both by colleagues (see the mention of an 'envious' account by her compatriot colleague Josephine Herbst in Appendix 4, part of a nuanced analysis by the Spanish academic Carlos García Santa Cecilia of the way that in Spain she was treated as a 'girl correspondent') and military officials in the field and historians of war reporting. This is also considered by the three women writers I have cited extensively in the section about Cowles (Sebba 2013: xi-xxix, Sorel 1999, Moorehead 2003).

3.4.4. Access in the fieldwork

Researchers who have used participant observation approach have sometimes found that their immersive involvement in their subjects' worlds problematised their objectivity (Burd 1983: 18). However, another serious difficulty facing those who research reporting is how to get close enough to participants so that they may be studied. This cannot be carried out using traditional ethnographic methods. It is often difficult for a researcher to get access to military and media operations in areas of conflict, as well as to the news organisations. None of these institutions are keen on independent scrutiny.[17] Maltby describes military and media alike as 'closed communities' (2006: 56). Robinson and Metzler suggest scholars who write contemporary news ethnographies in the digital era should adopt what she calls an 'ethnographic sensibility' (2016: 452), rather than pursue a particular method. I have, therefore, used my published fieldwork as a basis to explore contemporary cases which in some respects resemble analogous historical ones and I have tried to get as close as possible to my subjects. To do this I use qualitative research techniques familiar from my journalistic practice, such as interviewing my subjects using audio recorders or on camera. As noted above, for the fieldwork in Iraq I commissioned local camera operators to film my subjects and I myself filmed the participants who were close at hand. These techniques are explained in short methods sections in the study chapters.

3.4.5. Data collections and the unit of analysis for comparison

I approached the research from a particular point of view, based on a specific gap in the literature. I constructed the method for the thesis as I went along, gradually transforming my

[17] I can vouch for this. In 2006 I spent months fruitlessly negotiating with the UK Ministry of Defence for access to the same British army Brigade in Afghanistan with whom Sean Langan worked, the reporter who features in a case study in chapter 4. Al Jazeera had asked me to find out if I could produce a documentary series there.

journalistic skills into those of an academic researcher. My method was to deductively approach the news texts produced by the reporters in each case study in the study chapters, exploring how their sources have to some extent acted as news producers, thereby in some way influencing the way the reporter verified news facts in the published texts. It is deductive because I am employing my own knowledge gained by experience reporting conflict in the field. Thomas calls this 'local knowledge' (2011: 514). The method by which I collected data for the study chapters was different, but the unit of comparison is the same. I have outlined the method in short sections in each study chapter. I use media history for the newspaper cases in chapter 3. For the broadcast cases in chapter 4, on the other hand, I used my personal or 'local knowledge' (Thomas 2011: 514), including gathering data from my own experiences reporting in the field, from my peers in the tribe of frontline reporters, and in one case in chapter 4, a member of my family.

I produced written field notes and audio recordings from semi-structured interviews (Wimmer and Dominick 2006: 135) conducted with reporters and sources in any convenient way, i.e., in person, by phone, email, Skype or on social media. During the fieldwork I found ways to observe directly and indirectly subjects in their working environment and was able to interview many of them. How I conducted my research sometimes closely reflected my contributors' own work practices. For example, in the Iraq fieldwork in Chapter 5, in order to study the ways local journalists sub-contracted their own news gathering to others, I outsourced my data collection to local camera operators. This is explained in a short method section in that chapter. A key part of my approach is the emphasis on journalism as a process rather than a product. 'The journalism ethnographer today enters that physical-space newsroom, knowing that place represents only a small part of what needs to be observed' (Robinson and Metzler 2016: 447). Rodgers reflects on his experiences of reporting war in his monograph, *Reporting Conflict* (2012). In it, he blames scholars' lack of direct observation of foreign news reporting in the field for the paucity of such studies:

> 'While a researcher may be able to negotiate access to a newsroom or a TV production office in London, New York, Paris or elsewhere, it is hard to imagine the circumstances in which they could spend any useful length of time with a reporter covering a war [. . .] Much of academics' understanding of the field of reporting conflict — [. . .] the process of news gathering — is therefore by its nature secondhand' (p. 3).

Naturally, none of this is easy to observe *in situ*, which is why, as already noted, reporters usually arrive on the scene after a newsworthy incident has occurred, and retrospectively piece together what had happened from eye-witnesses. I kept comprehensive field notes using notebooks and recording devices with backups, which were retrieved and reviewed. This normal journalistic housekeeping is similar to the way qualitative research is normally conducted in the social sciences (Gilbert 2008: 245-265). The foreign language interviews were done with professional translators whom I trusted. In Iraq, Salman Adil Turki translated from Arabic, which was a potential conflict of interest since he was one of the contributors as well as being a professional translator. However, I detected no cause for concern. Since my Russian is fluent, some transcripts in the Ukraine fieldwork were completed in Ukrainian, English and Russian in order to better capture nuance.

3.4.6. Comparison of historical cases, and those from the fieldwork

The different processes of data collection produce different kinds of knowledge. Hine has coined the term ‘virtual ethnography’ for fieldwork conducted online (Hine 2000) and while quite a lot of the later material in the thesis concerns online news facts, which I have researched and is the subject of interviews with participants, where possible I have conducted analytical interviews with the relevant actors. Schramm writes: ‘The essence of a case study [. . .] is that it tries to illuminate a *decision* or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result’ (1971: 6). The traditional ethnographic participant observation approach normally provides a rich, ‘thick’ (Geertz 1973: 10) picture of real-life settings which allows close attention to emergent theory and social processes, ‘for purposes of description, or verification and/or generation of theory’ (Strauss and Glaser 1970: 183). In the light of the scope of my enquiry, encompassing as mine does both the digital sphere and media history, I have taken a slightly different approach, more akin to what Jackson calls *thin description*. This calls for a ‘flat ethnography where you slice into a world from different perspectives, scales, registers and angles – all distinctively useful, valid and worthy of considerations’ (Jackson 2013: 16). Ristovska writes that using it is a good way to understand how the modern digital news ecosystem works:

> ‘Moving away from historic assumptions that ethnography can -- or should -- provide a complete account embedded in the concept of thickness, thin description [. . .] privileges dialogue. It engages intellectually with the vernacular of the communities and phenomena it seeks to understand and considers the complexities of current information flows’ (2016: 356).

Each of the fieldwork data collections has unique logistical challenges associated with them, combined with my own developing understanding of what was achievable in terms of the data I could collect for the thesis, and how to interpret it. What this meant in practice was that the methods I use to extract and analyse the data developed over time: my first data collection, in Iraq, was in 2010. Robson writes: ‘With participant observation, it is difficult to separate out the data collection and analysis phases of an enquiry. Analysis takes place in the middle of data collection and is used to help shape its development’ (2016: 323). The final point to note is that I am writing from the perspective of being part of a particularly British war reporting tradition. The American understanding of what objectivity is and how it applies to news overlaps, but has its own distinct history and development (Chalaby 1996).

3.4.7. Section summary

In this section I have outlined my use of participant observation and my own positioning for the purposes of this research in the hierarchy of conflict reporters,

Russell's 'luckless tribe'. I also explain how I will compare like-for-like data, between the historical cases and those in the fieldwork.

3.5. Ethics

3.5.1. Applying the standards of good research practice

My university's ethical requirements for the conduct of research are to demonstrate I have a broad understanding of the context, at the national and international level, in which research takes place; I am aware of issues relating to the rights of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research; I appreciate and apply the standards of good research practice in my institution and discipline; and can justify the principles and experimental techniques used in my own research. I address these issues in my published, peer-reviewed academic research (Pendry 2011, 2015, 2017), on which I draw for the fieldwork chapters. Thus, the fieldwork interviews I conducted and my explanation of the ethical aspects of the methods are all in the public domain. Two of my articles were published in the journal *Ethical Space*. In them, I explicitly address ethical issues to which I will return in the relevant study chapters.

In the spirit of participant observation, I have also considered what is thought of as best ethical practice in the news industry. Reflexivity about the ethical implications of my research design and how I have applied it using participant observation has therefore been built into the design of the research. To take an example which I will return to later in this section, news executives' worries about their duty of care for newsgatherers in Syria is a central part of study chapter 7, as is how I dealt with material from anonymous interviewees, which is in line with ESRC guidelines. The key principle in these guidelines is that participants be informed that they could withdraw at any time and reassured that any information they gave would be fully anonymised in order to protect their identity throughout the duration of the research and beyond.[18] How to ethically handle contributors' anonymity was a particular concern in chapter 8, the Ukraine fieldwork. In this, I checked the identities of all interviewees against their passports and I anonymised some of them. My main concern was to safeguard interviewees who lived in occupied territory or whose family members did. After consulting with my supervisors, we decided to apply the highest standards of journalistic practice, as laid out in the most rigorous set of editorial guidelines available to ensure interviewee anonymity and the integrity of the data, drawing on the ethical codes used by the BBC (BBC n.d., Editorial Guidelines) and the *New York Times*' *Manual of Style and Usage* in the section 'Guidelines on Integrity: Anonymity and its Devices' (Siegal and Connolly 1999). The former is mainly concerned with excluding reporters who are personally involved in the stories they report, and the latter lays out in detail how anonymity may be granted to sources, laying out a transparent method for ensuring the integrity of how interviews should be used. In this respect, they go further than the ESRC guidelines.

[18] See: https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/ethics-case-studies/case-study-consent-and-anonymisation/ [Online. Accessed 4 September 2020].

The key principle, to which I adhered, is to give sufficient detail in each case for the reader to evaluate the circumstances in which anonymity was granted and crucially to explain what was agreed and why. In some cases, I granted interviewees anonymity based on their well-founded fears for their safety. I thus had a duty of care to my interviewees in Ukraine and I also took care to verify the accuracy of the material. I have only extended anonymity to individuals in certain circumstances. Since the question of how disputed facts are verified is the central element of the thesis, I wanted everything possible to be on the record and checkable. In line with good practice, in this thesis I will explain the circumstances where I granted anonymity in each case.

I understood and applied the relevant health and safety issues for researchers in areas of conflict, specifically the responsible working practices which help mitigate and manage risk. As noted above, I am extremely experienced at managing risk, both for myself and my contributors in areas of conflict. I had to exercise due duty of care to my research participants, for example when I commissioned camera operators in Iraq. I have written about best practice within the news industry about how to manage risk in contemporary areas of conflict (Pendry 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b) and I appeared on National Public Radio (NPR) in 2013 to discuss the way news organisations and reporters were managing their safety in Syria in the light of the journalist kidnappings.[19]

Part of good practice in the field when working with the university or any responsible sponsoring organisation is the use of detailed risk assessments developed in conjunction with actors on the ground. Done properly, risk assessment demonstrates that a researcher has a clear understanding of the possible risks in a given hazardous environment and the steps that can to be taken to address them. In each of my university research trips I consulted the university insurers and specialist insurance companies for conflict reporters visiting the frontlines to draw up a risk assessment. FCO advice was not to travel to Iraq or the Syrian border. I consulted journalists who had recently visited these areas. I had undertaken a week-long course called ‘Surviving hostile regions’ in 2012, run by the training company AKE Systems which is designed for journalists, aid workers and the like. AKE was the first industry training body to establish this kind of course in the 1990s in order to establish safe working practices in a range of hostile environments. These include areas of conflict and major emergencies such as post-earthquake or other natural events. It included classroom training in medical emergencies including trauma in the field; avoiding kidnap; managing one’s social media profile while travelling; and a half-day of role-playing live training. Equivalent courses have become obligatory for journalists working for news organisations in areas of conflict and are now considered best practice preparation. In the event, because of logistical complications as well as the difficulties of conducting candid interviews about sensitive subjects in such places, I avoided working on frontlines during the fieldwork. This is the same calculation involving access, risk and reward that the reporters whose work I was researching also make in their own working lives.

[19] The NPR web page is available here: https://www.wnyc.org/story/317961-freelancers-war/.

3.5.2. Ethics in Iraq fieldwork

As noted, using participant observation to gather and verify data during the Iraq fieldwork was a reflexive process. The challenge lay in how to conduct field interviews remotely due to the level of risk to the participants. In the end, after long debate, it was decided the safest option was to use the reporters' own work colleagues to gather data on my behalf. I therefore hired experienced camera operators in Fallujah and Baghdad to film the reporters as they participated in the research. In the news industry it is considered best practice to devolve responsibility for safety to the individuals on the ground while liaising closely with them. This is a basic principle in foreign news. It is how a desk editor normally takes responsibility for colleagues working in areas of conflict.

Both of the principal Iraqi reporters eventually decided they wanted to be credited. Arun's producer and Arabic translator in Erbil, Salman Adil Turki, had originally wanted to be named 'Muhammed' in the research because he was afraid of being identified as working for a foreign news organisation. However, he later changed his mind and told me to use his real name. In 2014, parts of Iraq, including Fallujah, were overrun by Islamic State and it is understood that al-Mukhtar, one of the reporters named in the research, may have left the country as possibly did his camera operator. The cameramen expressed no desire to be bylined and aside from the security implications as noted previously it is not normal professional practice for them to be credited. For the 'Raid in Kirkuk' item (2012b) I used still pictures that had been taken by a local photographer, Kamaran Najm, and audio recorded by Neil Arun during the raid. Adil Turki conducted interviews with Iraqi reporters on my behalf for the journal article about the widespread and unregulated use of the sub-contracting technique in the local media. The Fallujah reporter, Uthman al-Mukhtar, acknowledged it was 'unfortunate' (author interview) that he used five or six different identity cards. Three of these were completely fake and the rest provided by sympathetic employees working for local media organisations. The identity cards included one for a Shia area, another for a Sunni neighbourhood, for different paramilitary groups; and so on. On the day we filmed his work, al-Mukhtar said this was an effective way of avoiding difficult conversations with the insurgents he had been asked to interview:

> 'Showing an ID of an international agency may get us killed or kidnapped so we use an ID of a locally endorsed media outlet. Of course, getting these IDs are only possible because of our good contacts here. If I report a story that needs a government source, I reveal my real identity. For some stories, like the one I am doing now, I say that I am correspondent of a Gulf based TV channel [in other words, a news organisation working for an predominantly Sunni audience] to avoid [. . .] trouble with the insurgents [these armed men were also Sunni Muslims]' (al-Mukhtar, self-shot interview filmed in Fallujah).[20]

The ways in which I managed the risks with my contributors in Iraq fieldwork is linked to the duty of care I owed them. Again, this reflects many of the same editorial, ethical and

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[20] The insurgents he referred to Sunni paramilitaries who had been had been inspired by al-Qaeda to fight the US and coalition forces and in 2014 became part of Islamic State, taking control of much of Iraq. Fallujah was a major town in what the American forces called the 'Sunni triangle'.

safety implications being undertaken by news editors who have to decide how much responsibility they need to take for their staff gathering news in areas of conflict. Duty of care is explored more fully in study chapter 6, being an important part of the fieldwork about the reporting of the conflict in Syria in 2013.

3.5.3. Ethics in Syria fieldwork

I anonymised some freelance journalists for chapter 7, the Syria fieldwork due to their concern that their critical observations of working practices in news might lead to future work drying up. The study chapter explores the practical and ethical implications for sourcing of the employers' duty of care to a variety of newsgatherers in Syria, including international freelances and locally-hired journalists.

3.5.4. Ethics in Ukraine fieldwork

In the course of my research I was interviewed in Holland by two detectives from the Dutch-led five-nation Joint Investigation Team (JIT), the international team of police detectives building a case against those responsible for shooting down the Malaysian Airlines plane MH17, in order to discuss a specific aspect of my research which had a bearing on the case criminal case. Some of the Twitter sources in the Ukraine fieldwork are persons of interest to the police investigation into and had been offered witness protection because they had sensitive information which the detectives hope to use in court. There was a clear potential conflict of interest here between my responsibility to protect the anonymity of my interviewees and that of my civic responsibility to aid a criminal investigation into a mass murder where those responsible have yet to be brought to justice. In my discussion with the JIT I was able to clarify the point they wanted to clear up while also protecting my sources. It had the further benefit that by triangulating my interpretations of the information from my interviewees with those of the police detectives I confirmed their accuracy. My field researcher colleague Mari Bastashevski interviewed journalists and rights organisations on the ground to check as far as possible what my other interviewees, particularly the anonymous ones, told me.

3.5.5. Section summary

In this section I have outlined the ethical and safety concerns underpinning the research and how I dealt with them. Some of the ethical implications of the way I conducted the fieldwork reflect news gathering practices in areas of conflict, and these will be examined in the relevant study chapters.

3.6. Chapter summary: Methodology

In this chapter I devised three research questions to address the opportunity or knowledge gap to which the previous chapter's literature pointed. Next I outlined a chapter structure which addresses each research question in turn. In the same vein I have outlined a novel multi-method approach, devised by me, to answer these questions. It combines history, case studies, ethnography and an ethical element. By comparing how reporters worked with their source networks in a chronological series

of studies drawn from the history of war reporting, my method will examine how these informal sourcing networks operate as social networks and interpretive communities. The following study chapters will ground my data collections and analysis in a similar way to that of Morrison and Tumber in their social constructionist study of war reporters and their minders in the Falklands. They wrote:

> **'While the principal method of the research was the ethnographic one of having the journalists recount their experiences and comment on their approach and practices, the stories the journalists told have at times been used in the same way that an anthropologist might use stores and myths of some primitive tribe to explain the culture out of which the stories have emerged' (1988: ix).**

Similarly in the thesis, as well as giving a voice to reporters, I will also as far as possible do the same for their sources, and the source intermediaries previously identified as parajournalists. Such a study should be able to suggest some of the ways these groups have developed over time, how they contribute to the verification of facts in war reports and the changing discourse about what being a credible source means.

4. Newspaper cases

This study chapter and the next address my first research question, about conflict reporters' sourcing practices of the past. It contains four case histories from war correspondence published between 1850 and 1950, when the press was the central means of political communication and cultural influence (Hampton 2004: 18). The first case concerns the sourcing of news texts put on postal balloons at the siege of Paris by Henry Labouchère, reporter and co-proprietor of the London newspaper the *Daily News,* who sent anonymous correspondence from the siege of Paris (1870-1871). The second investigates a quite different situation, when under conditions of strict censorship during the World War One the accredited British reporter Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett responded to onerous reporting restrictions by establishing an unofficial, secret 'back-channel' communication with leading members of the political and social establishment in London in order to influence the conduct of the military campaign in Gallipoli (1915-1916) during the World War One. The third considers the political implications of the informal source networks of the American freelance reporter Virginia Cowles in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), including British diplomats and the spy Kim Philby who it appears may have used her to covertly influence British government policy on the appeasement of Nazi Germany. The final case examines the use by the Christian socialist *Daily Herald* reporter Ritchie Calder of well-connected community 'fixers', in order to highlight war planning failures at the start of the London Blitz in September 1940.

In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the introductory section in these study chapters will necessarily be brief. In each case I first review the distinct literature that situates each reporter's work in his or her[21] particular social and historical context. Then I explain the method by which I have extracted and analysed the relevant data. This is followed by a Findings section, which makes visible my data analysis and provides a descriptive summary of my main findings. Finally, I discuss what has been learnt in each case about the reporter's verification of facts using his or her informal sourcing networks and the role played by parajournalists. The chapter concludes with an extended summary of my key conclusions and contributions and explains what my analysis demonstrates about the ways in which conflict reporters working for newspapers in this period socially constructed and verified disputed facts.

[21] Only one of the cases in the current thesis is of a woman war reporter, Virginia Cowles. Luckhurst makes the point that, like the rest of the conflicts in this chapter, World War One 'was reported from an almost exclusively male perspective [. . .] woman war reporters 'were immensely rare exceptions' (Luckhurst 2016). Certainly there were more who reported World War Two, as described by Sorel in her book 'The women who wrote the war' (1999) but as Sebba relates in her book '*Battling for News: Women Reporters from the Risorgimento to Tiananmen Square'* (2013), even in the Nineteenth century there were more women reporters working in foreign news than is often supposed.

4.1. Henry Labouchère at the Siege of Paris (1870-1871)

Standard accounts of the reporting of the Franco-Prussian war focus on the way William Russell of the *Times*, at the height of his celebrity as a war reporter, was professionally eclipsed by an enterprising newcomer, Archibald Forbes of the radical London newspaper the *Daily News* (Atkins 1911: 219-221; Anon. 1939: 434-436; Knightley 2004: 50-51; Furneaux 1944: 204). These studies relate how younger reporters like Forbes, embedded with the Prussian forces, often scooped Russell because they better exploited communications logistics, especially the new electronic telegraph technology. Older correspondents still used surface mail. However, Labouchère's articles, published as the 'Diary of a Besieged Resident,' created the biggest journalistic sensation of the war (Koss 1981: 192). Russell spent most of the war immersed in the day-to-day affairs of the Prussian court outside Paris and his close professional relationship with the Crown Prince was caricatured by Matthew Arnold thus: 'You know the sort of thing, — he has described it himself over and over again. Bismarck at his horse's heap!, the Crown Prince holding his stirrup, and the old King of Prussia hoisting Russell into the saddle' (Arnold 1871: 111-112). This case examines the uniquely favourable circumstances — from the correspondent's point of view — where Labouchère's sources were almost entirely unaware of the critical copy he was writing about them.

4.1.1. Labouchère Method

The principal primary source in this case is Labouchère's collected news articles, which were published as soon as the siege was lifted to meet commercial demand, *Diary of the Besieged Resident in Paris* (Labouchère 1871b). It is possible to infer quite a lot from them about the way he sourced and verified his reports. I have also drawn on scholarly accounts, foremost among which is a journal article by Lucy Brown (1977) about the culture of news reporting in the Victorian period; biographies of Labouchère (Pearson 1945, Thorold 1913); a memoir by a journalist colleague (Crawford 1912); a biography of Labouchère's editor, Sir John Robinson (Thomas 1904); and histories of the siege (Baldick 1974, Horne 1990, Kranzberg 1950, Fisher 1965). John Simpson's professional assessment of Labouchère's reporting strategies was exceptionally helpful and can be found in his book *We Chose to Speak of War and Strife* (2016).

4.1.2. Labouchère Findings

Within weeks of war breaking out the armies of emperor Napoleon III of France had suffered serious defeats, he had abdicated, and the Prussian military cut Paris off from the outside world in September 1870. Louis Jules Trochu effectively became head of state, governor of Paris, and commander-in-chief of the defending forces, most numerous of which was the National Guard, made up of untrained Parisians. Both sides of the siege of Paris were reported by numerous international special correspondents, or "specials," including Russell. But the published reports of the 'Besieged Resident' greatly extended the readership of the liberal, campaigning *Daily News*, set up in 1846 by Charles Dickens, increasing its circulation three-fold by the end of the war to 150,000 a day, which put it well ahead even of *The Times* (Anon. 1939: 303). The owner, Henry Labouchère, had inherited a fortune of approximately £250,000, and in 1868 he invested £14,000 in a quarter share in the paper (Pearson 1945: 68-69). The *Daily News* was 'poor and struggling' when the Franco-Prussian war broke out (Brown 1977: 24). No doubt Labouchère's stake in the business motivated him to write entertaining copy. He would sell it in 1892 for an estimated £62,000-£92,000 (Koss 1981: 193). Labouchère was, therefore, an interventionist shareholder. Happening to be in Paris as the German army approached, he told his paper's correspondent on the spot that as a family man he should not take the risk of staying on and sent him to Tours, assuming the role himself, according to Emily Crawford[22], the erstwhile correspondent's wife and co-reporter (1912: 190-191). Robinson's biographer wrote:

> '[It]occurred to him [Labouchère] that it would be worthwhile to describe the everyday life of a besieged city from the point of view of an ordinary peaceful citizen. It was no business of his to tell what General Vinoy or General Trochu was doing, or whether a sortie would succeed or the thunder of Fort Valérian be silenced by the enemy. His mission was to say how people behaved, what they ate, what they talked about, how they amused themselves, while the enemy was at their gates striving to get in' (Thomas 1904: 180-181).

Labouchère came from an old Huguenot family who had lived in England for generations. He had, though, been born in France. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, as a young man the bilingual Labouchère knew Paris as well as he knew London, his obituarist wrote in his newspaper *Truth* (Anon. 1912: 186). He was twice elected as an MP, in 1865 and in 1867, having already served from 1854-1864 as a junior diplomat in Germany, among other postings (Pearson 1945: 40). So Labouchère knew the national characteristics of both antagonists in the Franco-Prussian war well: in fact, probably rather better than the belligerents did each other. The conventional route would have been to use one of the paper's special correspondents, experienced in military matters. Instead, the *Daily News* framed his letters as an account of the daily experiences of an ordinary resident. In this way Labouchère was 'free to record his own feelings and reactions, and to record them in the vocabulary of popular fiction [. . .] much of the news sent during the siege of Paris was simply descriptive of daily life — about food, drink and winter fuel' (Brown 1977: 33).

Paris's only communication with the rest of France was by balloon and carrier pigeon (Fisher 1965). This was obsolete technology, but the only way of getting reporters' stories out. On average, it took stories sent by balloon post two weeks to get into print (Anon. 1939: 434). Communication by balloon was unidirectional: none made the journey back into the city. Instead, homing pigeons were placed on balloons so they could fly back in with news from outside (Horne 1990: 126-128). Labouchère circumvented the censorship by sending copy to his mistress, the actress Henrietta Hodson, with whom he lived in Dorking, Surrey as private letters which left Paris by balloon post (Pearson 1945: 72). Miss Hodson would take them to the *Daily News* office on Fleet Street (Thorold 1913: 117).

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[22] Emily Crawford is an example of a woman foreign correspondent, who reported the events of the Commune for the *Daily News* after Labouchère left Paris in early 1871. Many years later, she wrote an article for *The Contemporary Review* about what it was like for her as a woman in the profession (Crawford 1893).

During the interregnum controls on the press were completely absent (Kranzberg 1950: 72) but the Trochu government quickly imposed strict censorship and unlike its Prussian counterpart, treated foreign correspondents covering the siege with hostility. A correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* was arrested as a Prussian spy and thrown into prison in September 1870 and suffered there, he wrote, ‘a series of outrages I shall not forget till my dying day, which I shudder to recall, and some of which I cannot recall’ (Edwards 1997: 131). However, Labouchère’s journalistic status was ambiguous, since he was not accredited as a correspondent but relied on a letter of introduction from the British Embassy (Labouchère 1871b: 227). In effect, he was working semi-undercover. The situation in which Labouchère found himself was exceptionally advantageous. He was doubly fortunate in that professional competition among the international reporters was absent, since their extreme isolation meant that like their sources in government, none of the international journalists in Paris who filed reports by balloon read one another’s copy. Such a lack of control by officials on the ground was highly unusual even at this early stage in the history of war reporting. Simpson writes that Labouchère preferred to write up reports of the fighting from the safety of his room in the Grand Hotel to visiting the frontlines: ‘There are plenty of journalists who still do this. It’s safer, naturally, and you are closer to your best sources of information’ (2016: 133). Labouchère himself confessed,

> ‘I am not one of those persons who snuff up the battle from afar, and feel an irresistible desire to rush into the middle of it. To be knocked on the head by a shell, merely to gratify one’s curiosity, appears to me to be the utmost height of absurdity’ (Labouchère 1871b: 251).

It is only fair to point out that Labouchère did, in fact, visit the front lines on several occasions, including going out with one of the ambulances. The overall assessment by historians of Labouchère’s news judgement is high. Baldick calls Labouchère’s letters ‘penetrating and perceptive’ (1974: 90) on the underlying events of the siege. Simpson rates him most highly out of all the international reporters besieged in Paris (2016: 130-131). Instead of relying on uncooperative government sources, Labouchère pieced together his articles with intelligence gathered from foreign diplomats, the best-informed of whom were the American ambassador Eli Washburne, who was uniquely well-supplied with news from outside (Labouchère 1871b: 181, 300). Soon after Paris was encircled Trochu announced he had a secret plan to break the siege and thereby win the war (Labouchère 1871b: 87, 142, 209), though he never revealed it even after the city’s capitulation. Labouchère’s main theme, totally at odds both with the official narrative and local sentiment, and one to which he returned time and again, was the gradual realisation that Trochu’s much-advertised ‘secret plan’ to break the siege either never existed or if it did, was ineffective. Under pressure from the patriotic Parisian newspapers, French commanders ordered a series of strategically inconsequential sorties to attack the Prussians (Horne 1990: 232). Labouchère was exceptionally critical of the authorities and his scorn increased as the siege wore on. Thorold considers Labouchère’s severe judgement on Trochu ‘on the whole the fairest [made by international journalists] during this period’ (1913: 123). Near the end of the siege Labouchère wrote of Trochu:

> ‘He was a man of plans, and could never alter the details of these plans to suit a change of circumstances. What his grand plan was, by which Paris was to be saved, no-one now, I presume, will ever know. The plans of his sorties were always elaborately drawn up; each divisional commander was told in the minutest details what he was to do. Unfortunately General Moltke [the Prussian commander] usually interfered with the proper development of these details — a proceeding which always surprised poor Trochu’ (1871b: 344).

Labouchère’s letters trace his disillusion with the French military leadership. ‘I am utterly disgusted with the difference between their words and their deeds’ wrote Labouchère on 6 October 1870 (Labouchère 1870). According to him their excessive self-regard prevented them understanding their predicament. ‘They are so astonished at their reverses, that they are utterly unable to realise what is going on,’ wrote Labouchère (1871b: 84). The Parisians believed they could not lose. ‘I really am sorry for these vain, silly humbugs among whom I am living’ (Labouchère 1871b: 178). Another passage sums up Labouchère’s attitude to the patriotic middle classes:

> ‘The papers contain lists of citizens who have sworn to die rather than surrender. The bourgeois, when he goes off to the ramparts, embraces his wife in public, and assumes a martial strut [. . .] Jules is perpetually hugging Jacques, and talking about the altar of his country on which he means to mount. I verily believe that the people walking about on the boulevards and the assistants of the shops who deal out their wares, in uniform, are under the impression they are heroes already, perilling life and limb for their country [. . .] It is almost impossible for an Englishman to realise the intense delight which a Frenchman has in donning a uniform, strutting about with a martial swagger, and listening to a distant cannonade’ (1871b: 19).

As the siege wore on, popular hopes that French armies would relieve the siege evaporated. The government failed in its diplomatic attempts to conclude an armistice on acceptable terms and a series of disastrous sorties likewise failed to break the encirclement. A visible result was the dwindling of supplies of food, which led to the population eating cats, dogs and zoo animals.

4.1.3. Labouchère Discussion

Labouchère’s case is important in this thesis because his experience demonstrates how a highly independent reporter could thrive as a result of his anonymity, the absence of competitors and the weakness of the authorities, and that he could, thereby, avoid news management and censorship by official sources. He was essentially live-blogging his daily experience in near-complete freedom from supervision and control by the local authorities. This allowed Labouchère to transmit his extremely critical near-daily commentary on the incompetence of the Paris government and the disillusionment of the citizenry as it progressed. Labouchère’s reporting broke the convention that war correspondents should restrict themselves to accounts of battles and strictly military matters (Brown 1977: 181). This decision later paid off handsomely for the stock owners. The commercial success of the

Daily News during the war in France, in which Labouchère played an important role, occurred during a period of great commercial competition between the leading London daily newspapers (Chalaby 1998: 84). The main logistical problem shared by all the reporters in Paris, that they could only file by using hot air balloons, also gave them the tremendous advantage that throughout the siege his sources were almost entirely unaware of what he was writing about them. In the history of war reporting such a situation is extremely unusual. It establishes this case as a useful one with which to begin to examine the ways in which reporters use parajournalists in areas of conflict. Labouchère spoke perfect French, the locals were unaware he was filing and, therefore, he was free from pressure from his sources to influence his copy. By contrast, the locals he enlisted to help him find things out were simply the people he sought out every day in order to file his reports: an example of the sources conceptualised in the previous chapter as helpful parajournalists. But crucially, given that he could pass for a local, Labouchère was able to write accurate first-hand reports about the large number of ambulance services staffed by able-bodied young men keen to avoid military service (Labouchère 1871b: 70); the trade in fake letters found on dead German soldiers which the local press parsed for evidence that the Prussians were tired of the war (1871a); and, commenting on the local newspapers, the proliferation of fake news of all kinds, so much so that news boys were forbidden from crying out (Kranzberg 1950: 119). Brown notes:

> 'The lessons to be learned from the Franco-Prussian war seemed pretty clear. Long personal despatches, by a competent writer, even if he were anonymous, would attract a following of readers, and the expense of telegraphing them was worth while' (1977: 33).

She also points out (1977: 32) that the public appetite for the events of the war among readers in London is demonstrated by the appearance within three months of the end of the siege of Labouchère's collected letters from Paris (1871b), an equivalent volume from Forbes (1871), two editions of the *Daily News* war correspondence (Anon. 1871) as well as a book by the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent in Metz (Robinson 1871). After the war, the manager of the *Daily News* was told: 'You and Bismarck [the German leader] are the only persons who have gained from this war' (1887: 281). However, Baldick also notes that Labouchère was the only neutral correspondent in Paris to express any sympathy with the working classes who supported a commune. In his view, they were at least clear what they wanted, while the middle classes were all talk (1974: 50). He also wrote sympathetically of the burden borne by the capital's women, largely unnoticed by the wider world. During the bombardment by the Prussian artillery which ended the siege, Labouchère wrote that the men who had signed up to join the National Guard had done little fighting:

> 'Jules and Jacques will hereafter quaff many a *petit verre* to their own heroism; and many a story will they inflict on their long-suffering friends redounding to their own special glory. Their wives will be told that they ought to be proud to have such men for husbands. But Jules and Jacques are in reality but arrant humbugs. Whilst they boozed, their wives starved; whilst they were warmly clad, their wives were in rags; whilst they were drinking confusion to their enemies in some snug room, their wives were freezing at the baker's door for their portion of bread. In Paris the women — I speak of the

> poorer classes — are of more sterling stuff than the men. They suffer far more, and they repine much less' (Labouchère 1871b: 320-321).

The adoption by Labouchère of a mode of discourse that gave full reign to his personal, even idiosyncratic, point of view had, therefore, the double benefit of helping his work find an audience and bringing a level of transparency to his reporting, no matter how disobliging this would be to patriotic readers within Paris. In fact, on rare occasions when secondhand accounts drawn from the English papers of what he was saying reached Paris, threats were made against him and other English journalists in the radical clubs and the Paris newspapers (see e.g. the letter of 24 December, Labouchère 1871: 262). The result was that while the tone of Labouchère's reporting was subjective, how he verified his facts is usually clear from his description. Essentially, by using his own eyes and ears, he became his own source. An example being the coffins of the dead being nailed up in the Grand Hotel room above Labouchère's (Labouchère 1871b: 248). The sources available to Labouchère included:

- Diplomatic staff from the neutral countries
- The various military units defending the city
- A wide range of civilians, including ambulance personnel with whom he embedded, womenfolk of the National Guard, shop assistants, and so on
- The local newspapers, which he read every morning
- The very few copies of the London papers which reached Paris
- The official news published by the authorities in the Hotel de Ville

Finally, Labouchère claimed to be impartial. In the introduction to his book about the siege he wrote that if he had sympathised with anyone in Paris, it was the ordinary people who suffered most from the effects of the siege: 'My bias — if I had any — was in favour of the Parisian' (1871b: vii).

4.1.4. Section summary

In the absence of news management by his official sources on location, the exceptional autonomy and agency displayed by Labouchère in this case establishes a starting point and benchmark in the thesis to begin to assess the sourcing strategies of less fortunate journalists in subsequent areas of conflict.

4.2. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett in the Dardanelles (1915)

This chapter's second case study investigates the sourcing of reports by the British journalist Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett of the British-led offensive at Gallipoli in the Turkish Dardanelles (1915-1916), the aim of which was to seize Constantinople. Unusually for an accredited correspondent in the World War One, Ashmead-Bartlett publicly criticised the military operation on which he was reporting. During World War One reporters were put into uniform, sent to the frontlines and wrote what they were told to. As Ernest Hemingway put it, the military turned reporters into propagandists, and if they did not like it, the journalists could 'shut up' (Hemingway 1942: xv). Lord Northcliffe, who owned both the *Daily Mail* and the *Times* and later directed the British government's propaganda effort, admitted that he had suppressed news of military incompetence in the Dardanelles. 'It is not wise to discuss this disastrous expedition in my newspaper, though the Germans are intimately informed of our impending catastrophe,' he said at the time (cited in *The History of the* Times*,* Anon. 1952: 277). At one dinner, Lord Rothermere, who co-owned the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* with his brother Lord Northcliffe, said:

> 'We're telling lies, we daren't tell the public the truth, that we're losing more officers than the Germans, and that it's impossible to get through on the Western Front. You've seen the war correspondents [. . .] They don't know the truth, they don't speak the truth, and we know that they don't' (Masterman 1968: 296).

The main accredited British reporters were all knighted when the war ended. Some told the truth, but only after the war. W. Beach Thomas, wrote in 1925: 'I was thoroughly and deeply ashamed of what I had written, for the good reason that it was untrue' (Thomas 1925: 109). Another, Phillip Gibbs, of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Chronicle,* invented a dialogue between the 'army chiefs' and 'the people,' to justify the correspondents' failure to tell the truth:

> '"Why don't they trust their leaders," asked the army chiefs. "Why don't they leave it to us?" "We do trust you, with some misgivings," thought the people, "and we do leave it to you — though you seem to be making a mess of things […] We want to know more about their heroism, so that it shall be remembered […] about their agony […] and about the way of their death […] We will not stand for this anonymous war"' (Gibbs 1920: 9).

Sanders and Taylor describe the crucial part played by the News Department of the Foreign Office in instigating the systematic use of press releases, press conferences and press officers as a way of shaping the content of news reports about the war (1982: 34-38). Recent scholarship has lent nuance to this familiar picture of monolithic, relentless news management during World War One. Luckhurst (2016) cites Badsey's (2012) study, on the impact of the widely seen documentary film The Battle of the Somme which was released in 1916, as evidence that the public had glimpses of a slightly more accurate picture of the war. Brownlow writes that it did contain some authentic footage but most was staged, and the film's best-known scene, supposedly showing the death of soldiers going 'over the top' was almost certainly faked (1979: 64-65). Conscripts returning from the trenches told relatives that journalists had not written the truth about what was happening there and some of these views eventually found their way into print. In her study of the ways in which British journalists were depicted in fiction, Sarah Lonsdale writes that war poetry and novels provided a further means for the British public to learn something of the truth about what was happening in the trenches (2016: 55-68). An example was the war poet and officer Siegfried Sassoon's imagined description of disillusioned conscripts bayoneting reporters who had lied about the true nature of the war: 'Grim Fusiliers broke ranks with glint of steel/At last the boys had found a cushy job/I heard the Yellow-Pressmen grunt and squeal' (Sassoon 1983: 85). A similar picture was painted by the *Daily News* journalist and erstwhile accredited reporter H. M. Tomlinson in a lightly fictionalised account of his time on the western front, *All our Yesterdays* (1931). In it, a fictionalised subaltern in the London Rifles expressed his antagonism towards journalists thus: ‘He wanted the blood of all war correspondents — seemed to want to paddle in it. He hated them’ (pp. 390-391). However, the popular contemporary view of World War One was very different to the mainstream modern understanding, that of senseless slaughter and lions led by donkeys (Clark 1991). But, Taylor writes, the point is that the wartime propaganda did in fact work (1999: 1-2). And there were long-lasting effects. Having been successfully imposed during World War One, the censorship of dissenting voices set the tone for subsequent wartime news management.

4.2.1.Ashmead-Bartlett Method

In order to explore how Ashmead-Bartlett sourced and verified news from Gallipoli I have principally relied on his published news texts, accounts written by his fellow reporters and the diaries of Sir Ian Hamilton (Hamilton 1920). Macleod has written the most extensive collection of scholarly studies of Ashmead-Bartlett’s activities in the Dardanelles (Macleod 2004, 2012, 2015), drawing on his personal papers. Hiley’s (1993) research examines the roles played by the War Office, the NPA and Hamilton. Ashmead-Bartlett published his articles from Gallipoli (1916) and, well after the war had ended, his supposed diary, entitled *The Uncensored Dardanelles* (1928). The diaries of the other leading reporter at Gallipoli, Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean, known as C. E. W. Bean, who later became the official Australian historian of the expedition (edited by Fewster, 2007 [1983]), provide a blunt assessment of Ashmead-Bartlett’s news gathering, but two newspaper articles he wrote after Ashmead-Bartlett’s death are more candid (Bean 1931a, 1931b). The other principal accounts which I have used of the accredited reporters are those of Sydney Moseley, of the *Central News* agency (Moseley 1935), Compton Mackenzie (Mackenzie 1929) and H. W. Nevinson, of the *Manchester Guardian* (Nevinson 1928).

Macleod makes the important point (2004: 109) that the passages in Ashmead-Bartlett’s diary covering the first part of the expedition cannot have been written at the time of the events it describes, the journalist having lost all his notebooks with the rest of his possessions on 27 May 1915 when the ship on which he was based was sunk. She notes that some predictions he made early in the campaign, published many years later in *Uncensored Dardanelles* (1928), display a ‘remarkable and dubious prescience’ (MacLeod 2004: 109). It seems Hamilton had little time to make notes during the operation, so his diary (published in 1920) is also not contemporaneous. With these caveats, these are still important sources. The originals are in the Institute of Commonwealth Studies archive in the University of London Library,[23] along with other personal papers and material from the Dardanelles Commission of enquiry, including Ashmead-Bartlett’s correspondence with the Commission about his giving evidence.[24]

[23] File ref: ICS84/A/11.

[24] File ref: ICS84/G/1.

4.2.2. Ashmead-Bartlett Findings

When the British navy and an army composed largely of Australian and New Zealand troops attempted to force a landing at the Dardanelles, the Newspaper Proprietors' Association (NPA), which represented the main London morning papers, was allowed to nominate the experienced *Daily Telegraph* reporter Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett to supply copy to it, at a time when the military had yet to permit journalists to be accredited on the Western Front. Ashmead-Bartlett covered the landings on 25 to 27 April, and the dispatch was delayed first by censorship at GHQ (General Head Quarters at Gallipoli) and then when it reached London, in order to allow Hamilton's official despatch to published first. His heavily bowdlerised description of the amphibious landing itself was only published in the *Telegraph* on 7 May (Ashmead-Bartlett 1915). Simpson identifies it as the key piece of journalism from the campaign (2010: 149-151), Macleod (2004) as 'the most important dispatch from Gallipoli' (p. 114). The NPA was deeply unhappy with material that was both heavily censored and late (Hiley 1993: 248). As time went on, GHQ came to see Ashmead-Bartlett's copy as too negative, and the censorship increased. Since the army failed to break out of the immediate area of the landing zone, Ashmead-Bartlett was reporting on a failing operation from the start.

After the battleship *Majestic* on which he was based was torpedoed, Ashmead-Bartlett returned to London in June 1915 to replace his lost possessions, including his notebooks and diary. On 11 June, Ashmead-Bartlett dined with Winston Churchill (newly demoted from his position as First Lord of the Admiralty because of the disaster in Gallipoli) and later the same day met the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith. At the latter's request Ashmead-Bartlett supplied a long memorandum outlining the operation's parlous situation, according to *The Uncensored Dardanelles,* his account of the expedition which was published after the war (Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 120-125). Ashmead-Bartlett then made the rounds of leading figures in London, including Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener and the Cabinet ministers Sir Edward Carson, Andrew Bonar Law and Arthur Balfour. It was apparent that the Cabinet, the Navy and the Army were divided on whether they should try to see the expedition through. He also lunched with Lady Hamilton, the wife of Sir Ian, finding her 'very much worried at the lack of success in Gallipoli' (Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 125).

Relations between Ashmead-Bartlett and Hamilton's staff deteriorated further after the reporter returned to Gallipoli on 25 June. Two days later the accredited reporters were banished to an inaccessible camp a day's journey from GHQ, as a result of rumours of Ashmead-Bartlett's activities in London (Macleod 2004: 128-137). Ashmead-Bartlett wrote in his diary that he found Hamilton's staff 'very hostile [. . .] [T]hey know I have seen all the Ministers, and that is what they resent more than anything else' (1928: 136). By the end of June, Hamilton had decided that the initial relaxed arrangements for the press in Gallipoli had been 'a hideous mistake' (1920 Vol. 1: 339). The War Minister Kitchener then sent two cables to Hamilton probably based, their recipient wrote later, on conversations Ashmead-Bartlett had had in London: '[T]he first [asked] me if it was true that the Australians were clinging to the cliffs at Anzac by the skin of their teeth; the second saying it is reported that the southern part of the Peninsula has become entirely untenable owing to shell fire from Asia' (Hiley 1993: 251).

By July 5, Ashmead-Bartlett was complaining to his diary: 'I completed what I could put together about the latest "big victory" [. . .] I do not know what value these accounts will be to the Press, as Sir Ian Hamilton apparently now acts as his own correspondent and sends in cables a long time ahead of ours' (Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 157). On 18 July, he wrote: 'The censorship has passed beyond all reasonable bounds. You are not allowed to give expression to the mildest opinion on any subject. They apply their blue pencil to taste, style, poetical quotations, and events of which the enemy are fully cognisant, and which have even appeared in the Press' (Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 159). An attempt by the Anzac[25] forces to break out of their beach head position in August 1915 ended in failure with a heavy loss of life. As a result of his unhappiness at what he considered Hamilton's suppression of bad news in his reports, Ashmead-Bartlett wrote another private memorandum for Asquith (published later as Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 235-243), which he gave to the *Sydney Sun* journalist Keith Murdoch (the father of Rupert Murdoch and recently accredited at Gallipoli). The reporters kept the letter secret from officials on the ground, so breaking the terms of their agreement with the censors. In the letter, Ashmead-Bartlett recommended that Asquith sack Hamilton and evacuate the peninsula. 'The army is in a deplorable condition. Its morale as a fighting force has suffered greatly, and the officers and men are thoroughly dispirited [. . .] we shall never succeed,' he wrote (Ashmead-Bartlett 1928: 241). The letter appears to have been destroyed by an official in the War Office as soon as it was found (Hiley 1993: 257). Ashmead-Bartlett was sent home in disgrace. Murdoch then wrote his own, even more damaging, version of the letter, and passed it both to the British Cabinet and his friend, the Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher (Macleod 2015: 64). Hamilton was sacked on 14 October. Macleod notes that though Hamilton always blamed the journalists for his removal, around the same time, a senior member of Hamilton's staff Major, Guy Dawnay, told decision-makers in London the operation should be abandoned, and that the decisive reasons for Hamilton's sacking were the failure of the August offensive and Dawnay's assessment (Macleod 2015: 64). The British Empire forces withdrew completely in January 1916.

The way Ashmead-Bartlett worked with junior officers in both the Army and Navy in Gallipoli demonstrates the importance to reporters of informal networks of sources and Ashmead-Bartlett's own agency in circumventing the official mechanisms designed to manage reporters. Ashmead-Bartlett understood how soldiers worked and knew how to talk to them (Macleod 2004: 105, 108-110, Fewster 2007 [1983]: 138, Mackenzie 1929: 109). By the time he went to Gallipoli, Ashmead-Bartlett was extremely experienced in military matters (Fewster 1982: 17-18). As a 16-year-old child he had accompanied his father, Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, as a guest of the Ottoman Sultan to observe the war his armies were waging with Greece (1898). He served in the Army as a junior officer in the Boer war (1899-1902). Afterwards, he worked as a Reuters war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905); was attached to the French army to report on its campaign in Morocco (1907-1909) and the Italian military fighting in Tripoli (1910); and he worked for the *Daily Telegraph* covering wars in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913.

[25] The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps operated during the Gallipoli campaign.

It is clear from Ashmead-Bartlett's diary that Army and Navy officers provided frequent briefings for him against their superiors. However, according to Ashmead-Bartlett's diary, Hamilton's Chief of Staff, Major-General Walter Brathwaite was unaware his own officers were sources for the critical copy Ashmead-Bartlett was filing when he was summoned on 30 June to account for it:

> 'He said it had been brought to his notice that I had openly criticised the conduct of the campaign. He declared that as a private individual I might hold what views I liked, but as a War Correspondent I had no right to any except to those which were given me officially [. . .] What really amuses me is this: those who are the severest critics of the campaign are certain members of GHQ itself, who are constantly coming to me with some fresh complaint. Braithwaite then said that anyone who, in future, spoke against the conduct of the campaign would be sent straight home. This, an empty threat, was quite lost on me, because it would mean withdrawing the entire army from the Peninsula, owing to the prevailing discontent' (1928: 146-147).

On 24 July, he wrote: 'Every day the criticisms of GHQ, and of the incompetency of some of the generals become stronger and more open' (1928: 163). Bean later pointed out that Marlborough-educated Ashmead-Bartlett came from the same social class as Hamilton's officers and this allowed him privileged access denied to the other reporters:

> 'In Gallipoli, as elsewhere, Bartlett went straight into certain circles to which the average correspondent even a man of Nevinson's reputation and culture was an outsider. They were not always the best circles although he had more natural access than others, whenever he wished, to the highest quarters on the staff both of the navy and the army. But the officers among whom he went spoke freely among themselves — and he was one of themselves. (Indeed, like Winston Churchill, he had served for a short time in the army)' (Bean 1931b).

In his book, Sydney Moseley criticised what he called Ashmead-Bartlett's 'private vendettas' against Hamilton (Moseley 1935: 104) and the former's habit of pumping junior officers for damaging information on their superiors, already noted: 'I was amazed to find Admirals and Generals and Society amateurs of all sorts meeting in our war correspondents' camp and openly criticising their Commander-in-Chief,' wrote Moseley (1935: 104). Bean wrote that Ashmead-Bartlett triangulated the accounts he received from junior officers from the different service branches:

> 'In the naval messes in which he dined, they often blamed the army and in army messes the navy. Much of the talk was rather reckless and irresponsible and it probably did not much help forward the common cause. There is always a danger that a war correspondent may find himself in the pocket of discontented men, second-raters who freely criticise their leaders. Bartlett was probably too experienced and capable to have his leg pulled, and what really interested and excited him was a germ of truth in the criticisms of many intelligent juniors. Whatever the cause, he became almost from the

first bitterly critical of the military conduct of the campaign; and the sharpness of his invective rendered him unpopular' (Bean 1931b).

4.2.3. Ashmead-Bartlett Discussion

As a 'name' reporter the NPA was keen to promote, Ashmead-Bartlett's articles were bylined. However, due to the strict censorship, the sourcing is opaque: in the 6,000-word *Telegraph* article on the landings (Ashmead-Bartlett 1915) only two quotes use direct speech and none of the facts in the article are attributed to named individuals. In an account published at the end of the World War One Ashmead-Bartlett rated the landings as 'failures, disasters, muddles and miscalculations' (1918: 78), though that is not what he wrote in his reports at the time. Bean, who later became the official Australian historian of the expedition, provided a skeptical evaluation of Ashmead-Bartlett's sourcing practices after the war. He wrote:

> 'Ashmead-Bartlett makes it a little difficult for one by his exaggerations,[26] and yet he's a lover of the truth. He gives the spirit of the thing: but if he were asked: "Did a shout really go up from a thousand throats that the hill was ours?" he'd have to say "No, it didn't." Or if they said: "Did the New Zealanders really club their rifles and kill three men at once?" or "Did the first battle of Anzac really end with the flash of bayonets all along the line, a charge, and the rolling back of the Turkish attack," he'd have to say "Well — no, as a matter of fact that didn't occur." Well, I can't write that it occurred if I know it did not, even if by painting it that way I could rouse the blood and make the pulse beat faster' (Fewster 2007 [1983]: 203).

Fewster writes that Ashmead-Bartlett could not have been close enough to have witnessed all of these events for himself. On the night of the landing, he only left the *London* to go ashore for half an hour in the middle of the night (Fewster 1982: 19). Bean knew that Ashmead-Bartlett considered him pedantic in his sourcing, writing after the war:

> 'Bartlett's opinion of my own method was "Oh — Bean — I think he almost counts the bullets!" (It was truer than he knew, for on some nights at Anzac, in an endeavour to see If one could reach a standard by which to measure the amount of disturbance as compared with that on other nights. I used to note down the number of rifle shots heard, on an average, in a minute)' (Bean 1931a).

Macleod writes that, unlike Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett preferred to work at a safe distance, writing sweeping descriptions of the situation on the ground and its strategic implications, rather than collect first-hand observation of, and quotes from, individual soldiers on the frontline. His tendency to embellish descriptions of events he had observed would later cause Bean difficulties with the Australian newspapers who were his clients. Bean's editors complained that his reports were insufficiently vivid compared to the Englishman's and had considered dropping him (Macleod 2004: 117). During Ashmead-Bartlett's visit to London

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[26] No doubt Bean wrote this because his editor had been asking why Ashmead-Bartlett's reports were more detailed and colourful than those of the other reporters.

in June 1915, he was quickly persuaded of the commercial possibilities of producing a movie with a cinematograph and filmed the only moving pictures of the campaign. Some of his journalism was quickly published in a book (Ashmead-Bartlett 1916) and he secured a lucrative 25-date speaking tour with an option for 75 more dates, cut short by illness (McLeod 2015: 73). Ashmead-Bartlett therefore had a clear financial motive for promoting a sensational account of the Gallipoli operation and was keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of spin-off projects which promoted his work (Fewster 1982: 28). Beyond Ashmead-Bartlett's covert communications with leading figures in London, his approach was to insert carefully limited criticisms of the conduct of a military campaign while stressing the overall rightness of the war and the heroism of the troops:

> '[I]t should be considered that were an author to attempt to construct an argument most likely to please readers and maximise sales, he would do well to avoid an attack on the overall plan of the campaign, while emphasising the heroism of all involved, providing a recognisable scapegoat and presenting an alternative route to victory' (MacLeod 2004: 108).

Ashmead-Bartlett was extremely well-connected to his military sources on the ground. But those who provided him with information were limited to:

- Junior officers with whom he dined in the various army and navy messes
- Staff officers at GHQ

The final point is that, as Hiley notes: 'The lasting impression of war correspondence at the Dardanelles is not of censored facts and suppressed rebellion, but of a docile press corps shot through with [. . .] self-interest' (1993: 259). Ashmead-Bartlett's colleagues thought he was wrong to break the agreement he had signed that gave the censor the right to veto copy (see e.g., Nevinson 1928: 58-59, Bean 1983: 164). Mackenzie wrote: 'Whether he was right or not he must have known that he could hardly persuade Sir Ian Hamilton to change his mind, and if he wished to remain as the only war correspondent with the Expedition, it was his duty to sacrifice his opinions' (1929: 108). There were plenty of tensions among the correspondents. Ashmead-Bartlett called another accredited reporter, Sydney Moseley, of the *Central News* agency, 'a terrible Jew boy' on his arrival (MacLeod 2004: 104).

4.2.4. Section summary

This is the first case study of an officially accredited war reporter in the current thesis ('embedded,' in the modern jargon). In Macleod's view, Ashmead-Bartlett's published work from Gallipoli epitomises war reporters' eternal dilemma when a correspondent covers a conflict in which their own country's armed forces are participants: 'are they official eyewitnesses or independent critics?' (Macleod 2012: 44). Macleod's comment applies equally to Ashmead-Bartlett's relations with junior officers in the field, his informal communications with elite figures in London as well as his appalling relations with Hamilton and other officials on the ground.

4.3. Virginia Cowles in Spain (1937)

During the conflict in Spain most reporters covered either one side or the other. Deacon writes: ‘some of the most iconic figures of twentieth-century journalism can be classified as Republican partisans with Robert Capa, Ernest Hemingway, George Steer, Martha Gellhorn, Herbert Matthews among them’ (Deacon 2008b: 62). In this case I examine the work of the well-connected novice American freelance reporter Virginia Cowles who was one of the few journalists to report on both sides in the Spanish Civil War (Sebba 2013: 95). She had used an inheritance to resign her job on a magazine in New York and fund a transition to a new career as a foreign correspondent, managing to publish an interview with Mussolini (Sorel 1999: 33). Cowles filed for British and US newspapers and arrived in Spain in March 1937. As Sorel points out, writing about matters that her colleagues found convenient to ignore put Cowles at great risk from the officials on both sides: ‘Having no experience of war, she had no real idea what her suggestion [which she had made to her employers: that she report both sides] would entail’ (1999: 34). My research shows that the way Cowles used her informal source networks to verify facts in her first substantial piece of war correspondence may well have left her open to becoming a conduit, unwitting or otherwise, for politically explosive information useful to her official sources. Notable among these were senior British diplomats keen to exploit her work to change government policy on the appeasement of Nazi Germany. This case examines the evidence that the Soviet double agent Kim Philby may possibly have used Cowles without her knowledge to influence British government policy on instructions from Soviet intelligence.

4.3.1. Cowles Method

This case examines the sourcing of key sections of Cowles’s 2,000-word article, the first she wrote for the *Sunday Times*, entitled ‘Realities of the war in Spain’ (Cowles 1937). Her memoir *Looking for Trouble* (1941) provides a great deal of detail about how she sourced sensitive information about covert external involvement in Spain, the implications of which I examine below. I consulted Cowles’s personal papers –- consisting of typescripts of her articles and letters to key individuals, which had been lodged by Cowles’s daughter Harriet Crawley, in the Imperial War Museum in December 2011.[27] Crawley told me her mother had not kept a war diary, nor did she ever see any notebooks. She did, however, share with me what her mother had related to her of conversations with Cowles’s better-known colleagues, Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn. What is impossible to know from the published work and also from conversations with Cowles' daughter is proof that specific misleading information originating from Philby about the numbers of troops and military equipment controlled by the Spanish, Soviet German and Italian governments was acted on

[27] Cowles’s private papers are held by the Imperial War Museum, London. Boxes 1 and 2 are entitled ‘Original news stories with datelines’.

by the Foreign Office in London.[28] I consulted the UK National Archives in order to find out. What I was hoping to find in the archive record was evidence that the British ambassador Geoffrey (Tommy) Thompson (based at St Jean-de-Luz in France on the Spanish border) was supplying these numbers to the journalist Virginian Cowles in the summer of 1937 in order to change the then-British foreign policy of appeasing the Fascist powers. The NKVD archives in Moscow relating to Philby's work in Spain might settle the matter of whether Philby's information fed into Cowles' report via Thompson, but since the early 1990s, when access to intelligence files was granted, these have been closed (Harrison 2012: 63). I have used secondary sources including memoirs, biographies and the two main historical accounts of reporters in Spain, *We Saw Spain Die* (Preston 2009) and the historian David Deacon's *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War* (2008b). Deacon also kindly shared his thoughts about specific aspects of Cowles's use of her social connections to elite actors in her informal source networks in London, France and Spain.

4.3.2. Cowles Findings

This section examines how Cowles discovered and sourced exclusive news about the covert involvement of Germany and Italy, the fascist states, and that of the Soviet Union. The fact that Stalin was supplying troops and materiel to the government side was not news. However, the true extent of the Soviet support was a closely-kept secret. Spanish government press minders concealed the fact that Soviet officers commanded foreign volunteer troops in the International Brigades. The Soviet military had played a decisive role in the defence of Madrid (November 1936 - March 1937) (Richardson 1982: 83-85). As Moorehead puts it, Stalin was 'intent on turning the international troops into a Soviet army within Spain' (2003: 151). The International Brigades were, in fact, under the command of the Comintern (Richardson 1979: 178), the Soviet organisation set up to overthrow established governments worldwide and establish communism. The 700 Soviet military advisers who had arrived in Spain in November 1936 were all agents of Soviet military intelligence, the GRU (Radosh, Habeck and Sevostianov 2001: 22). For the accredited journalists in government-controlled areas of Spain reporting this, Cowles understood afterwards, was 'taboo' (Cowles 1941: 45). One of these Soviet staff officers attempted to recruit Cowles as an agent in May 1937, when she mistakenly drove into his Divisional headquarters while trying to interview American and English volunteers in the International Brigades. There Cowles met Janos Galicz, one of the Soviet divisional commanders of the International Brigades (Richardson 1979: 183), the mysterious 'General Gall'.[29] '[A]lthough it was not officially admitted, he was in charge of the entire Central Command,' Cowles wrote later (1941: 46). Gal sent her away, handing her a bunch of flowers. 'You can write

[28] I have searched the FO Index, FO409 including the Green papers index, for 1937. I examined the cabinet minutes for March 1937, the month Cowles arrived in Spain, whose Catalogue Reference is CAB/23/87, to ascertain the British government's information about foreign troop numbers. As well as the Germany, Italy and Soviet Union: Foreign relations papers. I also examined the entries under Spain for that year. An archivist also conducted a separate search at my request. I was not, however, able to find evidence of what David Deacon described to me as the 'smoking gun' (author interview) which would prove that the explosive numbers in Cowles's article were actually fake news planted by the Soviets, slanted to help achieve Stalin's foreign policy objectives.

[29] Spelt 'Gall' in Cowles's article, but transliterated 'Gal' in the book.

your story from the garden,' Gall told her, patronisingly. 'No one will know the difference; and here is a souvenir to remind you of your adventure at the front' (Cowles 1941: 46). Soon after Cowles returned to Madrid and was surprised to hear that the general wanted to apologise for his behaviour if she would visit. Cowles was 'detained' for three days as Gall told her to read Lenin and tried to recruit her. 'When you are well instructed, join the Party, but conceal your views from your family. You will be useful as an under-cover agent,' he said (Cowles 1941: 53). Cowles was a woman in a male-dominated field. Her appeal to men could be used to her advantage. As she left Gal's base, he told her, 'You won't return, but you will boast to your friends that a Red Army General took a fancy to you' (Cowles 1941: 47). In her book (1937), Cowles described a series of subsequent warnings that she was under surveillance and in danger. The Press Bureau in Madrid learnt of her unofficial visit to Gal and a government official told her: '"The authorities are greatly displeased"' (Cowles 1941: 54). Sefton 'Tom' Delmer, of the *Express*, warned her not to drive to Valencia on her own: '"[T]hey have an idea you are a spy. [And] they won't hesitate to act ruthlessly. Road accidents are often the best way of settling an account"' (Cowles 1941: 54). When waiting in Valencia a few days later to fly out of the country, Cowles was met by a German who worked for the secret police. '"We have a nice new gaol at Albacete [. . .]" he told her. "You could write them just as well from there"' (Cowles 1941: 56).

Since the only international communications from insurgent territory was a telegraph connection that was closely monitored by officials, international reporters would go to France to use uncensored telephones (Harrison 2012: 53). After her initial reporting trip in Madrid and a subsequent one on the Republican side, Cowles spent the summer of 1937 in St Jean-de Luz, where Britain, France and the USA had located their embassies and described by Seale and McConville as 'a remarkable place for intrigue [. . .] every traveller — black marketeer, diplomat, secret agent, or journalist — paused there for a while on his journeys in or out of Spain' (1978: 129). There, Cowles befriended the British ambassador Sir Henry Chilton, whose daughter Cowles had known in New York. Cowles was skilful at using her connections (Sorel 1999: 33, Sebba 2013: 103) and this contact greatly facilitated her in finding an audience for her reporting. Unlike Chilton, the British First Secretary to the ambassador, Geoffrey 'Tommy' Thompson was firmly opposed to appeasement (Thomas 2003: 332). He was also adept at gathering information from journalists back from the front (Thompson 1959: 138), Cowles included. Like Philby, she was a member of the 'Boloney Club', an informal group comprising 20 or so British correspondents, some diplomats and two Spanish couples who worked for Franco's Press and Propaganda office. During this period it met in the fashionable Bar Basque restaurant in St Jean-de-Luz. Thompson explained: 'To qualify for membership it was only necessary to have been through some dangerous experience in the Civil War, such as air-raids, shelling or — as in several cases — arrest or imprisonment on one side or the other' (1959: 137-138). Plainly Philby had an agenda of which everyone else in the Boloney Club was unaware. It seems likely that Geoffrey Thompson passed on to Cowles Soviet disinformation that he had obtained from Kim Philby, the *Times* reporter who was accredited to the Franco forces and simultaneously working for both the Soviet NKVD and MI5 (Harrison 2012: 41-65). Thompson writes:

> 'There was little that Philby [. . .] did not know about the extent of German and Italian military participation. He [. . .] was able to tell me many facts which the Nationalist censors would never have allowed them to report to their papers' (Thompson 1959: 138).

Clearly Philby was a propagandist, working as he did for one of the belligerents. By his own account his primary duty at this time was to gather 'first hand information on all aspects of the Fascist war effort' for Soviet intelligence (cited in Preston 2009: 193). Thompson's later memoir *Front-Line Diplomat* (1959) contains an account of how he sourced his own intelligence about the covert involvement of Germany and Italy in the rebel cause. Published before Kim Philby's defection to the USSR in 1963, it is very possible that Cowles was the unwitting conduit. In the summer of 1937, as Thompson makes it clear in his book, Philby was his best source for top secret information from the insurgent side. These were matters of pressing interest to journalists and the neutral powers. Thompson certainly used Cowles to publicise more widely his stated views on the dangers of appeasement. In the *Sunday Times* article, Cowles warned of what she called the 'international aspect' (Cowles 1937) of the Spanish struggle, confidently including detailed, politically controversial figures for the number of foreign troops fighting in Spain. Cowles was well aware that this was its most newsworthy aspect, as she wrote in a note to her father in New York (held in her private papers). In *Looking for Trouble* (1941), Cowles does not say how she obtained these figures, but stressed in the book that Thompson thought it was important to alert the wider world to the growing threat from Germany and Italy:

> 'Long before anyone else was taking the situation seriously, he was sounding a grave note of warning; to him the Spanish Civil War was taking the shape of a fight against England. [He had] an accurate appreciation of the situation and gave his Government a forecast of future events which has since been borne out' (Cowles 1941: 63-64).

It is now known that Stalin hoped to avoid war with Germany by encouraging Britain and its allies to fight the fascist powers. The big numbers for the fascist troops in Spain quoted by Cowles in her article would tend to alert the western powers that the threat was real. The histories of this period suggest that the figures Cowles gave in the *Sunday Times* article for troops and military equipment were not particularly accurate: she overestimated by 100 per cent the numbers of Germans fighting, citing 10,000 instead of the true figure of 5,000 (Thomas 2003: 738). However, the figure of 80,000 Italian troops Cowles gave was closer to the true number, 40,000, than other estimates such as 100,000 or 110,000 then circulating in the French press (Coverdale 1975: 323).

4.3.3. Cowles Discussion

Working in the field of media history, David Deacon has conceived a schemata that categorises the biases of journalists, examining the work of foreign correspondents in the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) in a monograph, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War* (2008b), and associated journal article (2008a). He explores their ideological commitment in a classification system describing what he calls their *elective affinities*, which he uses as a heuristic to describe the extent to which war reporters identified with the 'ideas, ideals and ideologies' (Deacon 2008b: 9) of one or other of the conflict's antagonists.

Deacon embeds his typology in an analysis of censorship and news management by insurgent forces and the Spanish government, the technological constraints under which the reporters worked, and the changing political and editorial priorities of their news organisations. He observes that some of the less rigidly ideological reporters in Spain shifted their elective affinities as a result of the experiences they underwent in the course of their reporting. The sense that the cause of the Spanish Republic was worth supporting was linked to a close camaraderie among the correspondents who lived through the siege of Madrid (1936-1939), whose leading members were partisans for the republic. The informal networks made up of the reporters themselves were also important. One difference with previous conflicts was the concentration of most of the government-accredited reporters in the Hotel Florida, close to international telephone lines in the capital, Madrid. Vaill (2014) writes that both Cowles and Gellhorn — younger, less experienced women — relied heavily on the celebrity political journalist and fellow-traveller Hemingway for 'privileged access to the real movers and shakers', including the Russian advisers, in Madrid (p. 145) and privileged access to the frontlines (p. 181). But for the purposes of the current case study, what is evident is how very little hard information Cowles was able to obtain during her visits to Gal to confirm or deny any of the hard information about the numbers of foreign troops in Spain. The Gal visits take up in two sentences in the *Sunday Times* article. What made the publication of her *Sunday Times* article significant was its political impact in Westminster. The *Sunday Times* printed Cowles's story, even though its message tended to undermine the government's official policy that Nazi Germany's foreign ambitions should appeased. As Cockett points out, W. W. Hadley, editor of the paper, was in this respect the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's 'most loyal editorial supporter' among the London papers (1989: 50). Thompson, home on leave, intervened once again by passing Cowles's article to the senior civil servant at the Foreign Office, Robert Vansittart, who led opposition within Whitehall to appeasement (Cowles 1941: 105). The next day the former Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, waving the article, told the House of Commons that the fascist powers would not stop at Spain (Hansard 1937: 308-312). Here was a piece (Cowles 1937) that had been written by a reporter who had talked to both sides and who had tried to draw her own independent conclusions, but which also confirmed Lloyd George's pre-existing assessment of Hitler's intentions. What appears to have caught Lloyd George's attention was Cowles's warning that Germany and Russia were preparing for a wider European conflict and that the fascist threat to Britain was greater than that from the Soviet Union: 'Franco is assured that Italy and Germany will not expand territorially at Spain's expense; he boasts that with Fascism united there will be bigger plums to pick' (Cowles 1937). Cowles had thus joined the group of correspondents in Spain from the liberal democracies who like Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*, thought that appeasement would lead to disaster and the policy was 'a nightmare for all those who could see where it was leading the world' (Matthews 1946: 117). I found no evidence in the National Archives that the numbers in Cowles's article correspond to those that Geoffrey Thompson was supplying to the Foreign Office in London. However, the St Jean-de Luz connection is a hint that Cowles unwittingly played a role in Stalin's attempts to influence the British Cabinet as it weighed up whether it would ultimately be necessary to wage war on Hitler's Germany.

As already noted in the methodology section, like the other reporters in this chapter, Cowles belonged to the social elite and as Deacon says, ‘her social privilege provided her with significant advantages that compensated to some extent the gender discrimination of the era’ (author interview. This aspect is also discussed in his book, Deacon 2008b: 70). An example is how, in August 1937, she browbeat the millionaire and first-time press officer Ignacio Rosalles into taking her to Guernica without authorisation in order to find out whether, as the *Times* reporter George Steer reported at the time (Steer 1937a, 1937b), the town had been burned by the government forces:

> ‘Rosalles refused, saying he couldn’t endanger my life. When I argued with him, he turned on me accusingly: "That’s the trouble with you American correspondents. If you get captured, nothing happens to you, but I’m a Spaniard if I’m caught, I’m shot"’ (Cowles 1941: 70).

Cowles’s sourcing was all about ‘getting to the top man in any situation was both important in itself and valuable for smoothing her path whenever she might need their help’ (Sebba 2013: 103). Her sources included:

- General Gal and his staff in the Comintern-run Brigade HQ
- Diplomats and other members of the Boloney Club, including Philby of the *Times*
- The principal press officers on both sides
- Elite journalists, particularly the international reporters staying in the Hotel Florida in Madrid

During Cowles’s work with the Franco forces she fell out so badly with a senior rebel officer named Aguilera that she was left sitting in a battle zone for hours in a car alone, and warned she might be arrested. ‘Finding herself once again in grave danger, she counted herself lucky to slip out of the country,’ writes Sorel (1999: 42). Again, it was the government minders who threatened harm to her. Cowles’s sourcing of the *Sunday Times* article typifies her way of working, seeking out high-level sources. In her introduction to a Spanish-language collection of her mother’s articles from Spain, Harriet Crawley wrote that her mother was open about coming from the upper part of society, and that her social self-confidence greatly facilitated her reporting:

> ‘[M]y mother does not hide the fact that she was fortunate enough to know a great many people, many of them very influential, who could help her [. . .] meet whom she wanted to meet. There were meetings with Mussolini and Hitler, and long conversations with Winston Churchill as he pottered around his garden at his home in the country, where she was brought several times by his only son Randolph’ (Cowles 2011).

This is not a criticism of her professionalism, nor the quality of her reporting. As noted in the Methodology of this thesis, I am aware that I have assessed aspects Cowles’s reporting from the point of view of my own position as a middle-aged, male academic. And that hers is the only case study of a woman reporter in the thesis. The standard texts single Cowles out for her impartiality. As already noted, Cowles is universally praised not only for being one of the few reporters in the war in Spain who made an effort to be impartial but as one who, Moorehead notes, 'almost uniquely' (2003: 143) reported both sides. Writing about Cowles's book, *Looking for Trouble*, the historian/archivist on the Spanish Civil War, Carlos García Santa Cecilia, said:

> 'Where does the magic of this account lie? Why is it so interesting today? I think that the secret is in this phrase: "I wrote about the things that I had seen and heard, but I did not try to interpret them." It is as if we could open a window and see, directly, without ideological filters or speculations, what is happening'.[30]

Deacon also rates Cowles's journalistic objectivity highly in his book (2008b: 63). However, her political outlook did evolve over the course of the war. When she arrived in Spain, Cowles had no fixed ideological affinity for either side (Deacon 2008a: 403). By the time she wrote the *Sunday Times* article in this case study, Cowles believed it was important to urgently publicise her message that non-intervention and appeasement would not help the democratic countries avoid the coming war. Deacon told me in a personal communication that this was why Cowles had become strongly sympathetic to the Republican cause though remaining anti-Communist, at least in respect of what Stalin's agents were doing in Spain. It is also relevant to note Cowles's relationship with her better-known colleagues Gellhorn and Hemingway, both far more committed to '*La Causa*'. Zelizer's journal article 'Journalists as interpretive communities' (1993) is helpful here. She writes that reporters 'use their own conversations to generate meaning about journalistic work. Through discourse, they set standards of evaluation to appraise [. . .] journalistic coverage' (p. 233). Harriet Crawley says her mother told her she argued with Gellhorn and Hemingway about how much of the Soviet involvement in the conflict they should write about (author interview).

4.3.4. Section summary

The case has examined the ways in which, in different locations, Cowles constructed her various interpretive communities of mainly elite sources, and how they, in turn, used her. Using media history clarifies the implications of some of the sourcing mechanisms within the Boloney Club. Each of its participants which have been examined here constructed their own sourcing networks for their own reasons, not all of which were clear to the other club members. Later in the thesis I compare the way Cowles sourced information about the outside involvement in the war in Spain to an analogous case in contemporary Russian-occupied Ukraine.

4.4. Ritchie Calder in the Blitz (1940)

This chapter's final case study explores the *Daily Herald* reporter Ritchie Calder's use of unpaid activists as fixers to source his report of the bombing of South Hallsville School in Agate Street, Canning Town at the start of the London Blitz on 9/10 September 1940 (Calder 1940). Some 73 people were killed after plans for their evacuation broke down. The

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[30] This unpublished text is in Appendix 4.

victims were part of a group of hundreds of men, women and their children who were sheltering in a so-called 'rest centre' after their homes had been destroyed in an exploratory raid the previous Friday (Calder 1941a: 17). These centres were part of a complicated and untested system, in which bombed-out people who were ushered into them were supposed to be quickly sent on to other accommodation. When Britain declared war on Nazi Germany in September 1939, the government's preference for both the BBC (founded in 1922) and newspapers was that it be another 'newsless war' (Knightley 2004: 238) — meaning that the government would at all costs prevent the publication of unauthorised news. The plan, as in World War One, was for the government to appoint another 'eye witness' to write military press releases, which the media would then publish. The government also reinstated World War One's Ministry of Information (MoI) to sustain civilian morale, censor the media and promote propaganda (McLaine 1979: 108-136, 137-170)[31]. Throughout the course of World War Two the British government saw the BBC as an 'information disseminator of unique scope and potential' (Nicholas 1996: 6). In a war where national survival was at stake, accredited British war reporters were once again put into uniform and submitted to strict censorship, and the BBC played the leading role. British journalists were not impartial, making common cause with the government and the rest of the nation — that of defeating Hitler (Cull 1995: 101).

Taylor writes that the BBC had an 'outward appearance of independence' (1995: 223) from the Ministry of Information, but this was an illusion (Briggs 1995: 29). After the General Strike in 1926, the government had offered the BBC freedom to produce its own news in the hope it might play a role in unifying the nation (Briggs 1985: 103). At the start of the war, the BBC employed no war correspondents and the News department was a 'small and constantly frustrated operation' (Nicholas 1996: 141). The extent and nature of the control the government exercised over the BBC was deeply ambiguous. Unlike the German radio which was controlled by the state propaganda department, run by Goebbels (Doob 1950: 428), BBC policy during the war was to avoid lying directly about events. However, the first Director General of the BBC, John Reith, who had run the corporation since 1922 and served briefly as Minister of Information in 1940, knew that the government did not want the BBC to be truly independent. Reith wrote in his diary: '[T]hey know that they can trust us not to be really impartial' (cited in Hood 1980: 45). Reith's successor Duff Cooper wrote in May 1940: 'the BBC have accepted hitherto and will continue to accept general guidance from the Ministry and will bow to our decisions, having made their observations' (Briggs 1995: 30). Strong censorship operated throughout the war and applied both to the BBC and newspapers. However, the BBC pushed back hard and successfully against government control over the course of the war.

4.4.1. Calder Method

The main sources for this case were Calder's two books published soon after the bombing, entitled *The Lesson of London* and *Carry on London* (1941a, 1941b) and the article itself. The main strengths of these sources are the human dimension of how Calder arranged his networks of sources. They also help contextualise the political dimension. This is also their

[31] Scholars have begun work on a digital study of the MoI, which will be available at: http://www.moidigital.ac.uk/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

limitation, since it is all told from Calder's point of view. For this reason, I consulted memoirs, biographies and reports from other popular newspapers in the days after the bombing. Journalists continue to write about these events and I cite below a recent press report about one of Calder's fixers, Mickey Davis, as well as a recent press report claiming that the true number of victims of the bombing at South Hallsville was much higher than the official figure. Finally, also briefly mentioned in this case is the BBC's apparent suppression of the same news. This would make sense given the very different way the BBC reporters (then called 'news observers') worked and their lack of local source networks equivalent to Calder's in the bombed areas. I consulted the original BBC Home Service radio scripts from World War 2, held by the British Library.[32] I have not been able to prove whether, as I suspect, the BBC suppressed the news of what happened at South Hallsville on the instructions of the Ministry of Information (MoI) or possibly the Home Office. On the advice of the BBC's official historian Professor Jean Seaton, I contacted the MoI Digital Project to find out, but without result. It would have been interesting to know, but for the purpose of the thesis, this is a side issue.

4.4.2. Calder Findings

According to a contemporary account, arrangements at the start of the Blitz were makeshift. 'Homelessness was treated as a transient matter to be met by a twenty-four hour provision of tea, bread and margarine in a school building until the homeless person "made his own arrangements"' (Younghusband 1941: 383). Such places were not intended to be bomb proof, and were unpopular with those who had nowhere else to go:

> '[T]hey are almost always in a school [. . .] and even the windows of the Rest Centres have not been boarded or bricked-up. They brick up the police stations— they're all right! The result is that when a bombed-out case is taken to a Rest Centre, he sees what it's like — and runs for a shelter' (Farson 1941: 103).

Calder warned national officials in Whitehall three times on the day of the bombing to remove the crowd of people to safety. But the families stayed on while the authorities tried to organise their evacuation. The East Enders were sheltering in a place that to Calder seemed 'ominous of disaster' (1941a: 16).

> 'It was not a premonition. It was a calculable certainty. These hapless people told me how the bombers had ranged over the Docks, shedding their bombs — one, two, three, four, then a pause as the planes banked in a tight turn. Then that remorseless fifth bomb, dropped each time on the same corner. Filled with foreboding, I hastened back to central London' (Calder 1941a: 18).

Calder wrote later that Revd. Paton, whom he called 'The Guv'nor,' was the person who took him to the school to meet the doomed families in South Hallsville:

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[32] The original BBC Radio News Bulletin scripts for September to December 1940 on the start of the Blitz are on microfilm at British Library shelf mark MFM.MLD218C. They have not been viewed by anyone apart from the author for over 30 years, and the MoI censor's marks are still visible.

> ‘The Guv’nor and I heard women, the mothers of young children, protesting with violence and with tears about the delay. Men were cursing the helpless local officials who knew only that coaches were expected. “Where are we going?” “Can’t we walk there?” “We’ll take a bus!” “There’s a lorry we can borrow!” The crowd clamoured for help, for information, for reassurance. But the harassed officials knew no other answer than the offer of a cup of tea’ (Calder 1941a: 17).

The traumatised people were told to be ready for a convoy of coaches that were supposed to take them away but failed to come. The buses eventually appeared on Monday but as they began loading, an air raid began and the evacuation was postponed (Stansky 2007: 112). A bomb soon hit the building.

> ‘The next morning I saw the crater. I saw the rescue men descending perilously into it, with ropes around them, saw them pause, every now and then, in a hushed painful silence, listening for sounds of the living; saw the tomb of whole families [. . .] I spoke to the men [. . .] who had been cursing on the Sunday. They were speechless and numbed by the horror of it all now’ (Calder 1941a: 19).

It has never been established why the buses, which had been instructed to rendezvous in The George pub nearby, did not appear until the third day. They may have gone to Camden Town instead of Canning Town (Gardiner 2010: 33) — numerous pubs in London are in any case similarly named. The official number of dead was 73 (Gardiner 2010: 33). Calder claimed 450 people were killed (1941a: 20). However, rumours persist that the true figure may be 200 (Gardiner 2010: 33) or even 600 (Boniface 2010). The school is not named in either Calder’s *Herald* article or the book. To do so was forbidden by order of the Ministry of Information, as was publication of photographs of the dead (Stansky 2007: 145). It was generally awkward for outsiders to work on stories about the hardships undergone by East Enders. Pre-existing social divisions did not go away during the Blitz. Hodgson writes that poor provision by officials for bombed-out people may even have deepened them (2014: 97-98). Communist and Labour activists competed for the votes of people who had been bombed out of their houses and for whom official provision was inadequate (Overy 2013: 146-156). Ponting writes:

> ‘One of the central myths of 1940, cultivated at the time and embellished since, was that Britain was galvanised by crisis to change old ways of working, and became united as never before, with a strong bond of equality of sacrifice [...] The reality was very different’ (1990:138).

The official war artist, Henry Moore, did not want to stop and sketch sleeping people — or those trying to sleep — in the tunnel in Limehouse that at night turned into a long, dark dormitory for east Londoners. Field writes that was why he worked up his sketches later (2002: 32-33). British journalists laid on shelter tours for American colleagues. A typical trip might take in dinner at the Savoy and thence to the biggest and most overcrowded shelters (Reckitt 1991: 26). East End shelter-dwellers using such places disliked the ‘disdainful curiosity’ (Calder 1941b: 16) of the outsiders observing their hardships (Field

2002: 16, Ingersoll 1941: 104-113). Trench shelters in the parks of Stepney could be a foot deep in water, and every evening at the start of the Blitz people from the East End commuted to better shelters in the West End. What Calder called a 'handful of propaganda merchants' (1941b: 45) highlighted for political purposes the inadequate arrangements for civilians in the areas that had been hit hardest in the East End. The Communist MP Phil Piratin, who led a group of protesters in a sit-in at the shelter in the Savoy Hotel, later wrote:

> 'The contrast between the shelter conditions for the rich and the poor called for exposure [. . .] the visitors from the East End looked round in amazement. "Shelters", they said, "why, we'd love to live in such places" [. . .] There were three sections [. . .] Each section was decorated in a different colour, pink, blue and green. All the bedding, all the linen, was, of course, the same uniform colour' (Piratin 1948: 73).

There were, therefore, good reasons for Calder to seek helpful intermediaries to facilitate access to those who had suffered as a result of the effects of the bombing. Some of the victims in South Hallsville were people Calder had met during his previous two years of service on the Labour Party's Air Raid Precautions (ARP) committee (Calder 1941a: 13), the national and local government body set up to protect civilians during aerial bombing. Calder wrote of the Quaker, Jewish, Anglican and other clergymen who facilitated his reporting: 'The influence of such men of goodwill — and they were not confined to the clergy — was much more profound throughout the critical days than the efforts of [other] political groups' (1941a: 70). Calder's sponsors who facilitated his reporting of South Hallsville included the 'Dead End Kids' mentioned in the *Herald* article, named by Lewey in his book (1944: 51), who formed themselves into a unit of unpaid volunteer fire fighters at a shelter in Wapping; Mickey Davis ('Mickey the Midget'), unofficial manager of an air raid shelter at the London Fruit and Wool Exchange (Brooke 2013); and the radical, Christian Socialist clergymen (Calder 1941b: 53) Father John Groser and the Revd. W. W. Paton, who would later become a West Ham councillor and was subsequently appointed ARP Controller of the borough (Calder 1941b: 157). As well as Revd. Paton, Calder was especially indebted to Father John Groser for help with his reporting at South Hallsville (1941a: 29). Groser was one of the well-known activist clergymen living among the poor in the East End with the aim of improving their lot, a radical 'slum priest' (Davies 1983). When Calder located him during these first days of the Blitz, Groser had broken into an official food store, lit bonfires in the courtyard of his church and fed the hungry who had been bombed out of their houses. They already knew each other well. Calder had already interviewed some of both clerics' parishioners for a previous series of articles (1941a: 17).

> '[Calder] relie[d] on "sponsors" or intermediaries: local clergymen [. . .] but even more the Dickensian figure of Mickey Davies [sic], a hunchbacked, former optician, not much over three-and-a-half feet tall, who was the chief organiser of a large crypt shelter in Stepney and subsequently became its official marshal' (Field 2002: 26).

The day before the bombing, Calder had gone with Father Groser and Jimmie Hall, Labour MP for Stepney, to raise the plight of the un-evacuated people in the school to officials in the Ministry for Home Security and the Ministry of Health in Whitehall (Calder 1941b: 30 and 49-50). On the day of the bombing, the BBC said the government Ministers, Sir John Anderson and Malcolm Macdonald, had met East End MPs to discuss how to ameliorate the effects of the bombing.[33] It is possible that this is the meeting Calder refers to in his book. Calder was in any case closely involved with these policy discussions, and he could not have found a more dramatic example of official unpreparedness at a time of national emergency. ‘Working class people were just units in arid calculations, and even the calculations were outrageously inadequate,’ he wrote later (Calder 1941a: 23). In an unpublished biography, Calder’s daughter Fiona Rudd has written that he believed his role was to ‘act as a watchdog [for] ordinary people [. . .] –– checking that, whenever possible, their interests were being protected’ (Rudd n.d.). Calder did not see his role as simply exposing the administrative chaos at the start of the Blitz: like many journalists before and since he wanted to improve the situation on which he was reporting. After South Hallsville, he made it his business to visit rest centres and claimed he had forced the authorities to close the most hazardous ones (Calder 1941a: 27). Calder wrote later what he believed his role to be at this time: ‘It has been my job to expose the faults and to discover the remedy, and in that capacity I have been a constant and often violent critic’ (Calder 1941b: xiv). Calder thus combined a detailed specialist knowledge from his ARP work with a well-developed social network of powerful local source intermediaries. In the book he wrote that the school was in what was known as ‘Number One Bombing Area’ (1941a: 15). ‘To me it was not a zone on a map or a place of military objectives, but a congested mass of mean streets and humble homes peopled with men, women, and children, many of whom by previous associations had become familiar friends’ (Calder 1941a: 13).

4.4.3. Calder Discussion

Field notes of Calder’s articles:

> ‘[W]hat they offer is not transparent observation, but an interpretation shaped by the well-tried conventions of urban exploration, whose travel and literary references codify the social distances between observer, presumed reader and those observed, even as they express sympathy and admiration’ (2002: 28).

Calder’s principal sources were therefore:

- Grass-roots community leaders, such as the clergy and ‘Mickey the Midget’
- Well-connected members of the community, including the ‘Dead End Kids’
- The families waiting at the South Hallsville rest centre
- His previous contacts from Air Raid Precautions, in local and national government

He did not use the term ‘fixer’ and this is the sole example in the thesis of a case occurring in Britain rather than abroad, but in foreign reporting the people who journalists sponsor to gain access to communities are known by this name. When Calder put this network of well-connected community sources to work on his behalf, they were behaving as ‘fixers’. By this

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[33] Again this is from the BBC radio news scripts held at the British Library.

time there was already a long history of outsiders seeking out helpers to conduct reportage in the East End. Calder's way of working is similar to that of Jack London when he started work on *The People of the Abyss* (London 1903), his eye-witness account of slum conditions there. The book begins with the writer unsuccessfully trying to secure a guide at the travel company Thomas Cook to help him navigate community life in Whitechapel and Bethnal Green (London 1903: 7). Long before Calder, therefore, the East End had been seen by outsiders a foreign country where it might be important to take a guide with local knowledge. Fixers in foreign news gathering have language skills. But there were no linguistic constraints when he reported in 'Blitz Town' (Calder 1941b: 36). But the well-connected members of the community whom I have already mentioned boosted his reporting power when they made 'social introductions' to sources (Murrell 2015: 73). Murrell comments that working with source intermediaries like this inevitably problematises the role they play in editorial matters (2015: 96).

This raises the question of how objective Calder was. Well-known for his socialist beliefs, Calder likened the political importance of Black Saturday to 'Bastille Day' (1941a: 128) — a liberation of the people and was a strong advocate for distinctive Labour Party policies stressing joint endeavour. 'Frank discussion of such failures is essential in a "People's war" [. . .] If we want a united nation, the Government must remove the suspicion [. . .] that the poor were being left to fend for themselves,' he wrote (Calder 1941a: 35). Calder's readers expected the *Daily Herald* to examine critically government policy (Richards 1997: 158-159) – partly owned as it was by the Trades Union Congress. Simpson characterises Calder's newspaper as 'ideological in tone, certainly, but not aggressively so [. . .] *The Herald* believed in holding power to account, even when it supported the authorities' (2010: 360). Gardiner has suggested that Calder may have exaggerated the numbers killed at South Hallsville school to force the government to make rest centres more secure and wrote about South Hallsville while in a state of fury. 'In his view, the government was culpably negligent of the safety of its citizens — particularly its poorest citizens, who had not the resources to make their own arrangements' (Gardiner 2010: 32). In comparison to Calder's work, the BBC never mentioned the South Hallsville bombing. From the scripts held in the British Library it is clear that the BBC reporters' way of working during the period at the start of the war was essentially to get out of bed, walk around the nearby streets in order to produce their scripted voice pieces. Given the technological strictures at the time, their reports were transmitted without clips and only rarely had direct quotes from named sources. The day after the bombing, on the BBC Home Service news report the Home Service was promoting the benefits of rest centres: 'the system was working smoothly and well' according to the newsreader Joseph Macleod on the 6 pm bulletin.[34] Taylor later wrote: 'Censors and journalists, we are told, are natural enemies in a liberal democracy; the role of the one is to prevent the unfettered activities of the other. [. . .] During World War Two, censors and journalists became natural allies' (1999: 171). The lack of preparedness for aerial bombing was, indeed, a major logistical problem for the government. A contemporary analysis highlighted the existence of 'an almost fantastic number of central

[34] BBC news scripts, Tuesday 10 September 1940, 6 pm. Microfilm reference: SL1K_20170815145450.

departments, special commissioners, borough and county borough councils' who were supposed to deal with bombed-out people' (Younghusband 1941: 386).

4.4.4. Section summary

This case does not examine the sourcing of foreign news, but as Calder wrote afterwards, during the Blitz correspondents in Fleet Street were only a short bus ride away from the 'biggest story which British journalists have ever had presented to them' (Calder 1941a: 75). The participation of Groser, Davis and Calder's other sources points to wider issues. Naturally they shared a mutual interest in publicising the plight of bombed-out East Enders, and there was a long history there of activists revealing the impact of poverty and poor social provision in order to effect change. It is only recently in the history of journalism scholarship that scholars have begun to examine the work of professional fixers but in the Calder case it is notable that the agency of well-connected local people was a key factor in Calder's sourcing and therefore how he, as a professional journalist, socially construct the facts in his report. What this case demonstrates is that the distinctions between these roles are somewhat porous.

4.5. Newspaper Cases Discussion

The sourcing arrangements in these cases are in line with Williams's observation:

> 'The testimonies of war correspondents can be assessed in relation to the accounts provided by other parties to war and conflict. The military -- and in particular those responsible for media relations -- provide insight into the work routines and practices of correspondents' (2012: 351).

These cases demonstrate how various kinds of informal source networks operate. 'Outlier' cases tend to undermine better-documented trends and features but because of their atypicality, can lead to more nuanced analysis (Lijphart 1971: 692). One the one hand, the example of Labouchère demonstrates his great freedom to source his stories. His isolation from the news market and the ambiguity of his status within Paris ensured not only that he was able to operate with striking independence, but that his range of sources was exceptionally broad. The biggest reason for this, apart from the freedom he enjoyed working semi-undercover with a wide range of different kinds of sources, and his published work being almost never scrutinised locally, were Labouchère's own personal qualities and experience. To these factors can be added his facility with all the relevant languages, but also his exceptional nosiness and being prepared to question received wisdom of those surrounding him. The collected letters Labouchère published in his book (1871b) depicted the siege in a way which, with the benefit of historical hindsight, was objectively broadly correct. The reasons the government failed to defend Paris were, as he wrote, the incompetence of the French authorities, the effectiveness of the Prussian army and the self-delusion of the city's defenders. None of these problems were pursued by the local journalists, whose copy Labouchère read every morning over his coffee.

By contrast, there is the circumscribed scope of Ashmead-Bartlett's sourcing. In Hiley's view, Ashmead-Bartlett was forced into playing the role of a critic of the military on the ground. Mostly, because he was so poorly handled by his military censors:

> 'Hamilton [. . .] believed, like most of his generation, that newspapers dealt only in sensationalism, and thus missed the fundamental truth of news reporting in the twentieth century: that journalists will always align themselves with their sources of information. War correspondents [. . .] will always reproduce the views of the armies to which they are attached, and will only fall back on a claim to represent the home public if deprived of news or of proper facilities for its transmission' (Hiley 1993: 260).

But there is a narrowness about Ashmead-Bartlett's informal source network, depending as he did on his off-the-record conversations with disgruntled junior officers and those with the staff officers at GHQ who would speak to him. This bears similarity, in this respect, to the way in which the frankest conversations between leading journalists, newspaper proprietors and politicians in London took place during the war in private, not with newspaper readers. Luckhurst writes that Ashmead-Bartlett was typical in this respect:

> 'In playing this role, mildly dissident correspondents [like Ashmead-Bartlett] behaved as useful channels between pillars of the political and social establishments. They ran few risks of stimulating political opposition to the war. They did not want to. Such criticism as they were prepared to express was intended to enhance the Allied war effort, not to challenge its legitimacy' (2016).

Virginia Cowles, a novice conflict reporter, had her very first foreign news report mentioned on the floor of the Commons, having become part of policy discussions at the highest level in official circles in London. Again, the human qualities are important. She was an assiduous networker, adept at exploiting her elite sources, such as the press officers on both sides of the conflict in Spain which I have already outlined. Arguably, deftly exploiting these kinds of informal connections is intrinsic to how reporters work, though my initial review of the literature demonstrates that this is not particularly how scholars of journalism understand sourcing. The ways in which Cowles exploited the interest of the Comintern General also demonstrates the importance of informal source networks, as does what we know of her conversations at the Boloney Club. My research on Cowles's sourcing network sheds some new light on the influence the double agent Kim Philby appears to have had on British government policy about how to deal with Hitler. This case makes a clear contribution to our understanding of the period.

Finally, while Murrell writes that 'the traditional foreign correspondent has been employing fixers as a default production process for decades' (2019: 1680), the case of Calder demonstrates that the same was true for a domestic reporter too, and his accounts in the books (Calder 1941a, 1941b), which he turned around quickly during the Blitz, give a fairly detailed understanding of how one of his unofficial fixers within his community source network led to another. Bearing in mind my definition of parajournalists, it is noticeable that well-connected local people are always how journalists socially construct facts on the ground. It is also important to add that Calder's elite political and administrative contacts within Whitehall, the ARP and the Labour Party also helped frame why the report mattered.

From a contemporary perspective it can be seen from these cases that the medium of print tended to obscure how the reporters sourced their reports. Writing about modern journalism, Carlson comments: 'Journalists deploying unnamed sources signal their active role as participant creating stories and negotiating with sources' (2011: 39). There is also a clear lack of transparency in the way facts were verified in the news texts published by the reporters in this chapter, which is why in the cases I have pieced together from other sources the respective narratives. Much of the information in these reporters' articles would have been hard to check at the time. The difficulty arises at two levels. At one level is a lack of clarity about who stands for the truth of the story, when the universal convention during the Victorian period and long after was that foreign correspondents' articles in newspapers were unsigned. Secondly, the fact few quotes are attributed would have made it far more difficult to triangulate information from individual sources within these reports.

4.6. Chapter summary: Newspaper Cases

This is the first of two study chapters answering research question one. On one hand, the cases also demonstrate the truth of the traditional social science view of scholars of reporter-source relations, in the ways that official sources in these cases instrumentalise reporters to amplify their propaganda messages. Yet from a social constructionist perspective, the application of my methodology to the case studies identifies the use by newspaper reporters of informal sourcing networks populated by helpful source intermediaries — parajournalists in my schemata — as an important strategy to increase their reporting power, by setting their sources to work on their behalf. Using my method, the cases show that such interpretive communities can be made up of reporters, sources or, in the case of Calder, community fixers who are parajournalists. From the newspaper reporters' point of view, the exigencies of print medium often allowed reporters to avoid detailed explanation of their sourcing, rendering the means by which facts were verified opaque. The next chapter will examine the sourcing practices of broadcast reporters, and comprises three case studies drawn from the period when television dominated foreign news after World War Two, before the advent of digital networks.

5. Broadcast Cases

The previous chapter examined the social construction of war reporters' informal sourcing networks in the era when foreign news was published in newspapers. This chapter examines reporter-source relations in the era when television news was passing from what Hallin (1992) calls the Cold War 'high modernism' period, when news professionals from the liberal democracies 'felt they had overcome all the basic contradictions that historically have troubled the practice of journalism' (p. 14). By the end of the first decade of the new millennium television news had for decades been the 'most used, most valued, and most widely shared' way for people in liberal democracies to consume news' (Nielsen and Sambrook 2016: 5; see also Barnett 2011 and Cushion 2012). Hallin describes this era as one when television news was centred on 'the norm of "objective" reporting [and whose principal features were] a high level of ideological consensus [and the idea] of the journalist standing above political divisions to serve a unitary public interest which transcended them' (Hallin 2006).[35] The implications for heavily regulated British television news journalists for their working practices on the ground has been characterised by Simpson thus:

> 'Television viewers expected sources on camera to make clear and decisive statements and for soundbites from untruthful sources to be clearly signposted by the reporter's accompanying words. By the end of the broadcast era, decades of strict regulation in Britain, and healthy competition with international television networks, including rolling news, have resulted in carefully sourced television news reports' (2002: 65-67).

This chapter contains three case histories from this period of transition, drawn from the Gulf War of 1991, the British army deployment to Helmand province in Afghanistan in 2006, and the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008.

5.1. Jon Alpert in the First Gulf War (1991)

This case examines a controversial untransmitted television report by the American reporter and camera operator Jon Alpert, on the consequences for Iraqi civilians of the US coalition bombing of Iraq during the Gulf War of 1991. After Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait in August 1990, conflict broke out in the Persian Gulf between Iraq and a US-led coalition in January 1991. The constraints of the reporting of the Gulf war illustrate the logistical and technical impediments to reporting of this era. Television reporters were arguably even more vulnerable to pressure from their sources than journalists in the newspaper era had been.

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[35] No page number is available for this article, which is out of print. I have seen a printout with text only.

5.1.1. Alpert Method

For this case I initially consulted the authoritative account about the episode, published soon after it occurred by Michael Hoyt, the Executive editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review* (1991). There is also Alpert's own account (Alpert 2005). Based on what was already in the public domain I asked Alpert for, and received, the 10' 16" edit of the material he had shot in Iraq (exceptionally long for television news, but understandable given its rarity).[36] I conducted a phone interview with Jon Alpert with semi-structured questions examining two main areas: firstly, the practical means he used to overcome the restrictions on filming put in place by the Iraqi government censors with whom he was made to work for part of the time. The minders he worked with are naturally inaccessible at this remove, so it was unfortunately impossible to talk to them. Secondly, I asked Alpert to explain again how he understood his report was suppressed by two of the principal US television networks. Whether it was, is disputed. Taylor researched the matter and decided it was, writing: 'The major US networks would not touch Jon Alpert's film' (1993: 372). It seemed important to put Alpert's assertions to the news executives concerned. Accordingly, I located a former commissioning executive who was named in the Hoyt article. He would only do a Skype interview on condition of anonymity. I have agreed not to name him, on the basis that he said he was reluctant to get into an argument with Alpert but wanted to correct Alpert's published claims that his story had been suppressed. I have used extracts from the interview below. Clearly there is also the possibility that the executive in question was reluctant to put his name to the rebuttal of Alpert's points because he was lying to me. Following the example of the *New York Times* editorial principles already mentioned in the ethics section of my methodology, I leave my reader to make up their own mind.

5.1.2. Alpert Findings

President George Bush made it clear he did not want international journalists to stay in Baghdad once the bombing began (Wiener 1992: 1) and Iraqi officials kept changing their mind about which journalists they wanted in Baghdad and what they could report (Simpson 1991a: 281-282, 1991b: 11). But as in the Spanish Civil War half a century earlier the weaker side, in this case the Iraqis, desperately wanted the news organisations to tell their side of the story. When war broke out the freelance video journalist Alpert, who had been producing news reports for the American NBC network for 13 years (Alpert 2005: 495), secured scarce Iraqi reporter visas for himself, a producer and a translator to accompany Ramsey Clark, the ex-Attorney General of former US President Carter, and opponent of the war, who wanted to see for himself the civilian casualties from coalition bombing in order to produce a report about it (Clark 1992: 63-169). Alpert says he told NBC that he would be independent of Clark's mission but blurred the distinction when talking to Iraqi officials in order to secure a visa (author interview). Don Browne, Vice President of NBC News, subsequently removed his backing for Alpert's trip because he wanted the visas for a staff correspondent and when Alpert asked him to look at any footage he managed to get out, according to Alpert the executive's response was: 'Well, I don't think you are going to get

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[36] Freelances like Alpert who have not been hired on a day rate are normally paid according to a fee calculated per minute of material used. This is also how we were normally paid for our work in Frontline News. Therefore, the incentive is to supply clients with longer edited stories.

anything' (2005: 497). No doubt the Iraqis calculated Clark's high-profile peace mission in terms of its propaganda value and granted the visas on that basis.

Alpert managed to film more freely than any other international journalist during 1990-1991. On the night of 2 February, Clark and Alpert's team entered Iraq from Jordan unescorted, filming food trucks hit by bombing (Taylor 1992: 182).[37] When Ramsey Clark, Alpert and his crew arrived at the Iraqi border they were not met by any officials, meaning Alpert's team drove to Baghdad unaccompanied. This can only be explained by the general chaos after weeks of bombing. During the drive to the capital Alpert filmed some of the scenes of destruction caused by the bombing that are seen in the cut story. In Baghdad, they stayed in the Al Rasheed Hotel with other foreign journalists and were taken on a press trip to a plant that had been bombed. It was labelled 'baby milk factory' on a newly-painted sign, which Alpert filmed[38]. Alpert's team travelled unescorted to Najaf, about 160 km south of Baghdad. Finally, they were taken on a press trip to Basra, located on the Shatt al-Arab between Kuwait and Iran (6-7 February) where they filmed a woman whose father had been injured when their house had been bombed (Hoyt 1991: 45). He is depicted briefly lying in bed in hospital in a wide shot as the voice over says that all the features had been burnt off his face. None of the Iraqis in Alpert's edited report are named. There were good reasons for this. The reluctance of several sources to speak freely is evident. One of Alpert's interviewees in Najaf was a man standing in front of his brother's destroyed house who said he thought the war was 'stupid'. Normally Iraqi civilians were reluctant to speak to reporters if an official was present.

> 'Interviewed just before the end of the war on New York's channel WNET 13, Alpert said that the "stupid" remark would have undoubtedly been censored if the Iraqis had got their hands on his film, but he and his crew had been careful not to extract too many private opinions from their interviewees for fear of getting them into trouble if the Iraqi authorities had seized the footage' (Taylor 1992: 182).

When officials accompanied Alpert's crew, the restrictions they imposed on filming were extreme. Alpert wrote:

> 'The Iraqis had the most severe press restrictions and censorship that I had ever experienced. You were presented with a two or three page document that listed all the prohibitions. You could not pan your camera. You had to inform your baby-sitter — everybody was assigned their own personal censor — exactly what shot you were going to do, when you turned the camera on, and when you turned the camera off. You could not shoot from a moving vehicle, you could not shoot government buildings, you couldn't shoot anybody in the army, you couldn't shoot any religious institutions, you

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[37] I describe scenes here from the unpublished, edited video material supplied by Alpert and supply published references as well wherever possible.

[38] Whether it was actually a plant for the manufacture of baby milk was never settled. The minders on location insisted it was but the close-up Alpert shot of an apparently freshly painted sign saying 'Baby Milk Plant' in English and Arabic was inconclusive.

couldn't shoot any schools — you couldn't do anything. We said, "My goodness, if we follow these rules, we don't have a prayer at showing anybody what's going on in here in Iraq"' (2005: 497).

Alpert's team used 'gaffer-tape' to seal everything that would show the camera was recording, including the record light and the panel showing the tape was moving. The crew communicated with grunts and sneezes: '[The minders] knew we were doing surreptitious filming but couldn't prove it,' says Alpert (author interview). When the minders demanded they review the film, Alpert came up with excuses, such as that the batteries were dead. Alpert could not upload his footage using the Iraqi government satellite because a censor monitored it for forbidden footage. But Steve Friedman, executive producer of the NBC *Nightly News*, promised to get the story on air when Alpert told him what he had in a call Alpert was able make using CNN reporter Peter Arnett's satellite phone (Alpert 2005: 500). Alpert and his team, along with Clark, were again inexplicably allowed to drive to Jordan unescorted, Alpert again filming as he went. When it was time for Alpert's team to leave, he said: 'We filled up 4 Hi-8 tapes We made four decoys, labelled 'very important filming of soldiers,'[39] and put the tapes in my breast pocket' (author interview). He decided that covert filming was morally acceptable in the circumstances:

'We have our own situational ethics in these extreme situations. NBC has 500 pages of standards and practices. I read them all, and they don't say you can't trick people like the minders. I feel this is a greater truth. We are allowed to lie. You don't have enough paper to fill up all the times I have broken the law in China. And the same happened in Mexico. That's what makes this type of reporting very difficult. The battlefield is changing instantaneously and you have to keep yourself centred morally. It's very hard' (author interview).

When Alpert flew to New York with his exclusive material he told me he felt strongly that it was important to show a different view of the war than had hitherto been presented to the American people:

'When you are the only American for [many] miles, people react to you as such. You start thinking what America stands for, and what patriotism is. [This is] what pushes you to places like Iraq. It's good to have reasons for going to war zone where you are vulnerable. One of them is patriotism. It emboldens you. [. . .] Once you get up close to war, it is so horrific [that] you feel compelled to remind people what war is like. Because our power wreaks havoc in the world. And it's going to wash back over us. We need to educate people to what war is like. I hate war. But I am trying to preach against war' (author interview).

However, Alpert was unable to get the material broadcast in the US on two different news networks, the first being his normal clients, NBC. After flying to New York, Friedman

[39] It is standard practice in the field for a camera operator who believes he or she is at risk of being detained and searched for incriminating material to have a spare blank tape which can be quickly inserted into the camera and readily surrendered in order to keep safe concealed footage which has been shot previously.

confirmed to Hoyt (1991: 47) that a piece was due to run on 12 February. That afternoon Alpert was definitively ‘sacked’ by Michael Gartner, the president of NBC News. Alpert later wrote account that he then took the material to Tom Bettag, the executive producer CBS’s evening news programme, who also turned it down (Alpert 2005: 505). Alpert says: ‘Gartner feared taking heat for an unpopular story — a story of the effect of the war on Iraqi civilians’ (Hoyt 1991: 47). Alpert believes that had his report been run, it would have contradicted what the Pentagon was saying and executives at the network were worried their reporters might subsequently have been denied places in Coalition news pools (author interview). An account published in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Hoyt 1991) explores why news executives at NBC and CBS suppressed the report; all denied it was for political reasons (Hoyt 1991: 47). If Alpert’s material was never broadcast on the network television news channels in the United States for this reason, this would be evidence of how unwelcome independent reporting is when the armed forces from a reporter’s own country are participants in a conflict. One of the news executives involved, who would not discuss this on the record when I contacted him, told me the reason the network declined to air Alpert’s story was not a conspiracy but mentioned general concern about Alpert’s working practices. Three years before Alpert had re-enacted the final lowering of the US flag at the embassy in Kabul, acknowledged by Alpert as a mistake that damaged his credibility at NBC (Hoyt 1991: 46). All accounts agree that the connection with Ramsey Clark was part of the problem (see Hoyt 1991: 47). According to the NBC news executive Don Browne in an interview with *Variety* magazine: ‘Ramsey Clark announced to the Washington press corps that footage of a trip he made would be on *NBC Nightly News* [. . .] “We didn’t want it to look like we were associated with Clark’s mission. We’re not going to prostitute ourselves like that”’ (*Variety* staff 1991).

5.1.3. Alpert Discussion

Alpert used a small Sony Hi-8 camera, often without a tripod, and dispensed with some television news conventions such as formal interviews and reporter pieces to camera, asking questions from behind the camera, more in the manner of an observational documentary (Prior 1990: 101). ‘The style we adopted was crafted to challenge the way news was being done. Newscasters did stand-ups [known as ‘pieces to camera’] in safari suits and everything was built around the stand-up of the correspondent,’ says Alpert (author interview). This style of programme-making made it easier to incorporate a wider range of sources into his edited story. Conventionally constructed news reports would likely not feature the cagey middle-aged men in poorly fitting suits, a point considered by Prior: ‘Alpert’s lens and microphone bring the viewer uncomfortably close to the subjects of his analysis [. . .] Alpert admits that he “probes more. We do participate with our subjects. We try not to alter what would naturally occur. But when something occurs that we have a question about, we ask it”’ (1990: 101). In terms of the social construction of his sourcing network, Alpert’s incorporation of his interactions with the minders into his cut story demonstrates how transparency benefits. By removing the ‘third wall’ it highlights the minders’ role, subverting it. Alpert’s work thus also marked the start of a move towards light, cheap video recording technology that is so noticeable now with ‘citizen witnessing’ on social media (Allan 2013).

There have been many occasions in the history of war reporting when foreign correspondents have had to employ fixers when they were really government ‘minders’ whose real work with reporters is to prevent them publicising unhelpful facts. From a reporter’s post of view, the function of an official who prevents reporters getting free access to sources and ensures they put a constructive spin on the journalist’s presentation of events is the opposite of a fixer. As well as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Murrell cites the Soviet Union and, at the time of writing, China and Vietnam as examples of states which have mandated the use of government officials by international journalists. ‘While these people [the minders] may present obstacles, they can still be found useful in some way, and most correspondents consider it part of the challenge to work around such problems’ (Murrell 2015: 111). It was fortuitous that Alpert’s team was allowed to work without minders for about half of the seven days they spent in Iraq (Taylor 1992: 182). This is where media theory is unable to predict the way that officials tasked with the management of the media actually operated, demonstrating as well the value of examining the particular features of a case as it occurred. The officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Information were either intrusive (which was wholly to be expected) or, oddly, absent. They are examples of what Reese identifies as ‘individuals within the group who have advantageous structural “gatekeeper” locations’ (Reese 2001: 180). Later accounts of the international journalists who had been based in Baghdad during the first Gulf war are full of battles with the minders, who prevented them filming bomb damage that officials wanted to conceal (Simpson 1991: 311) and on occasion, these Iraqi officials stopped Peter Arnett’s live broadcasts (Arnett 1994: 374). Alpert’s sources were therefore:

- The government minders, who became part of his story
- Iraqi civilians, many of whom spoke more freely without the presence of minders

Unconventional or critical reporting was not welcomed at British and US news organisations, whose armed forces were participating in the war. McNair describes them as being in ‘propaganda mode’ (1998: 164). The pressure for reporters to be patriotic in such cases, is very strong, writes Fuller for the benefit of the wider community in which they live, their country:

> ‘Lives are at stake, if not the survival of the community, and in such circumstances no institution can remain neutral and retain the intimacy with the community it needs in order to do its work’ (1996: 90).

It is difficult at this remove to assess the real reasons for declining to air Alpert’s material. It may have been a combination of factors. As Friedman told Hoyt: ‘In my position, I’d have run the piece. But I only run the show [. . .] The fact of the matter is, he complicated our life during a very complicated time, so the feeling was, That’s it. See ya’ (Hoyt 1991: 47). Alpert told me that afterwards the story may have been shown on European television (author interview, Alpert 2005: 504).[40]

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[40] I was unable to locate references.

The television reporting of the Gulf war illustrates the logistical and technical challenges facing journalists using television technology in the Nineties. Schlesinger calls television journalists of this era ‘captives of technology’ (1987: 270). For television reporters and their crews working abroad it was a major operation to shoot and cut a story, and transmit it back to base. A news crew working on a foreign assignment likely consisted of reporter, camera operator, sound recordist, editor, satellite technician, producer ‘and several first class tickets’ worth of excess baggage’ (MacGregor 1997: 184). Television is still the most demanding medium in which to practise journalism. But in the late Eighties and early Nineties, for television reporters, the technology remained unwieldy, expensive and, from the point of view of the current thesis, a barrier between them and their sources.

5.1.4. Section summary

The *Sunday Times* journalist Nick Tomalin, killed in the Golan Heights during the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, wrote of war reporting: ‘[A]n immense amount of lying, cheating and subterfuge is nearly always necessary to get to the point where one can honestly reveal the truth’ (1975: 90). Finding himself within the official network of mostly unhelpful source intermediaries on the ground, i.e. the government minders which had been assigned to him, Alpert employed what he called ‘situational ethics’. Alpert was not a conventional news reporter and the material he shot in Iraq was filmed and edited in a more relaxed style, unusual for news reports in the 1990s but more common now that cameras are smaller, lighter and simpler to use. Such are the remaining case studies in this chapter, encompassing the work of the self-shooting reporter Sean Langan, who worked entirely alone in the field with his sources on location in Afghanistan, and Tim Whewell, who worked with a camera operator and local fixers only in South Ossetia (in the former Soviet republic of Georgia).

5.2. Sean Langan in Afghanistan (2006)

For this case study I explore the sourcing of Sean Langan’s 48-minute Channel 4 documentary, broadcast in January 2007, entitled *Fighting the Taliban* (Langan 2007a). In April 2006, an armoured brigade of 3,700 troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade, mostly from the third Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (3 Para), deployed to Helmand, the most conservative province in Afghanistan. During a visit to Kabul in April, the then-Defence Secretary, John Reid, said: ‘We would be perfectly happy to leave in three years’ time without firing a shot’ (Albone et al. 2006). This is not how things turned out.

5.2.1. Langan Method

The main source was Langan himself, whom I know but am not close to and the Channel 4 report itself (Langan 2007a). I conducted a semi-structured interview with him and consulted the account Langan wrote for *GQ* magazine about the Garmser operation (2007b), as well as an interview with him recorded later at the Frontline Club in London, a media club formed out of Frontline News Television, the agency in which I worked as a conflict journalist (Langan 2009). I interviewed former Royal Irish Regiment Captain Doug Beattie, Langan’s best source in the film and commanding officer of the detachment at Garmser, to which Langan attached himself for the duration of the engagement. Beattie wrote a memoir (2008) which provides a wealth of information, not all of it flattering, on how the British soldiers viewed Langan. I consulted my younger brother, Major Shaun Pendry, formerly of the Royal Dragoon Guards, who set up the official headquarters known as the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Helmand regional administrative centre, Lashkar Gah, between September 2005 and April 2006 (see Walsh 2006). He shed light on the British army's media strategy at the start of the British deployment and introduced me to the erstwhile Irish Guards Colonel Charlie Knaggs, the senior British commander on the ground at the time of Langan's film, who bent the Ministry of Defence rules to permit Langan to accompany the troops. Shaun had shared a tent with Knaggs for several months and made an introduction on my behalf. Using this personal connection to a respondent has I believe no other discernible methodological impact. In my experience journalists regard it as entirely sensible way to start to research a story by phoning up personal contacts who may know something useful.

5.2.2. Langan Findings

At the start of in the British deployment in Helmand there had been uncertainty about how Army officers on the ground should present their mission to the public. Major Shaun Pendry had previously asked senior officers what to do if one of the Kabul-based reporters came by the Helmand HQ, looking for an interview. 'I was told to hide,' he wrote (personal communication, 10 February 2017). The Ministry of Defence accredited the *Sunday Times* reporter Christina Lamb to accompany a unit which was ambushed and almost overrun. At one point a Sergeant Major asked her: 'Have you ever used a pistol?' (Lamb 2006). Within days, the *Sunday Times* ran her story over five pages. The unit's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Tootal, of the third Parachute regiment (3 Para), later wrote that Lamb's article 'provoked an angry response in certain government departments in Whitehall and led to what the press considered an official media blackout on reporters in Helmand' (Tootal 2009: 100).

Langan was accredited with the British army, and had spent weeks negotiating access to British operations in Helmand, with the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) Media Operations department in London. He had persuaded the senior British commander in Lashkar Gah, Colonel Charlie Knaggs, to let him accompany troops on a mission to reoccupy the small town of Garmser, 86 km away, which the Taliban had recently occupied (Beattie 2008: 79). By Langan's account, he made an informal agreement with Knaggs that he was not seeking to film drug use or 'green on blue' attacks (by Afghan police or army servicemen) on Nato soldiers (Langan, author interview). Knaggs thought the British army was doing good work which needed to be publicised. He told me: 'We had the courage of our convictions that we were doing the right thing for the Afghans and the international community. We had nothing to hide and everything to gain from showing the international community what we were up to. We were there in support of the Afghans. Joint police and military operations were a very important part of the jigsaw when trying to get an Afghan solution' (author interview). However, Langan's permission was revoked at the last minute just as he was about to board a British Army Land Rover. 'Someone must have emailed London. But the soldiers on the ground felt London was misunderstanding the situation' (Langan, author interview).

According to Langan, Knaggs pretended he had not received the message from London, telling the reporter: 'You're on an embed with the ANP [Afghan National Police], We haven't seen you,' (author interview). Langan took the hint and boarded a Toyota Land Cruiser belonging to the local police accompanying the troops bound for Garmser, travelling with 17 British troops and a much larger force of Afghan National Police (ANP) and Army troops. Knaggs confirmed he arranged access for Langan but said he does not recall the terms (author interview). In voice-over at the start of the film Langan said: 'This is the six day battle the MOD didn't want you to see. The six day battle that raises questions about Britain's war in Afghanistan'. Langan told me: 'The MOD had tried to stop me getting on embed and it was very important to show that' (author interview).

Over six days the troops undertook some of the most intense fighting the British Army had endured since Korea. The unit was only saved by calling in 57 airstrikes, with planes dropping huge 500 lb and 2,000 lb bombs onto the village (Beattie 2008: 166).[41] Journalists' accounts of their relations with soldiers tend not to dwell on the antipathy service personnel sometimes display towards them.[42] Since no Media Operations personnel were present, the soldiers' reactions were unfiltered. The commanding officer of the detachment, Doug Beattie wrote in his memoir that at first the soldiers viewed Langan with contempt: 'To me all journalists were out for the big headline and the shocking stories, quite happy to leave out the detail and the context they saw. The truth? It was something they could take or leave' (Beattie 2008: 70). Langan had inserted himself unasked into the unit and was not part of it. 'He wasn't asking for our help and we weren't giving it,' wrote Beattie afterwards (2008: 101). Having got ready in a hurry, Langan forgot to bring a spoon and no one would lend him one, so to eat his combat rations he had to improvise.

> 'I was really annoyed, eating in front of them with a stick. They wouldn't give me a spoon or fork, which was their way of telling me, "You're a cunt. What else are you going to forget?" It [later] changed dramatically into a '*Band of Brothers'*[43] thing, someone handed me a spoon and I was one of the gang' (Langan, author interview).

This was not the first time he had experienced this kind of mistrust from soldiers. On a previous embed, British soldiers from the Parachute Regiment who had heard his first name had demanded to know whether he was a Catholic:

> 'Among the Paras [soldiers from the Parachute Regiment in the detachment] were so many South Africans and Rhodesians, just like in the Foreign Legion. They thought I was a London media type. They mistrusted all the British media. I noticed the Paras

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[41] Naturally, given the limited perspective of the Nato troops and Langan, it was impossible to know how many civilians were killed. This was a typical shortcoming of the embedding process.

[42] Once again Morrison and Tumber's study of accredited reporters in the Falklands war (1988) is the exception. They relate soldiers' death threats to journalists (p.79) in a chapter on the relations between journalists and the minders, which was replete with misunderstanding and hostility (p. 131-162).

[43] An American television drama mini-series about a combat unit in WW2 composed of diverse 'characters' from different ethnic backgrounds.

> were really off with me. They wanted to know, "Was I a Fenian [Catholic]?"' (Langan, author interview).[44]

Langan told me that in order to keep the bargain he says he had struck with Knaggs, he ended up editing out some of the potentially controversial footage from his cut story:

> 'When the battle started, we were stuck behind a jeep getting shot to pieces [. . .] Some poor Afghan soldier shot another in the leg and another Afghan pulled out a comedy joint. So it was a green on blue, and they are smoking dope. I started laughing. [Not showing this was] perhaps not really journalistically valid but it was not a necessary [scene]. There was a bit where they were ordering in meds. I could just hear them say, if we got cut off, we are fucked. So I was aware of things filming things the MOD wouldn't have wanted [. . .] I did make them promises. A film can be very critical without ruining a soldier's career [. . .] It was going so badly, it was farcical. The further forward on the frontline, the more you see. I was chatting to the guys about what would happen if we are over run. It was the air support that kept the Taliban at bay' (Langan, author interview).

In the absence of minders, Langan's involvement in treating the wounded allowed him to bond with the soldiers (Beattie 2008: 173, 216). 'I would put the camera down and lift an IV drip or lift [a casualty's] head,' Langan says (author interview). In his interview with me, Beattie added: 'We had a particularly bad day. Sean would have had some amazing pictures, but he helped to deal with the casualties. I genuinely saw the humanity in the man. It wasn't just about violence. I knew his actions could save lives' (Beattie, author interview). Langan filmed some of Afghan troops asking to be allowed to kill a Taliban prisoner who was receiving medical attention. British soldiers stood guard to keep him alive (Langan 2007a, Beattie 2008: 140). He told me:

> 'The wounded Taliban, they stopped the Afghans shooting him. It was worse than you see on camera. The British were holding them back all night. I often thought what would I have done if I had seen something really wrong [. . .] Being in that situation was so special for me as a journalist. Over course of week I was able to film as an invisible part of the gang. I didn't get much out of the soldiers for the first three days. You have to prove yourself on front line and get shot at. We started getting shot at and I became a mascot, very much part of keeping our spirits up. There was an English thing of "We are all in it together". I could have done a million embeds and not had that film [. . .] Because we were all cut off, that forced us together. They were all from different units, from different regiments. Paddy was quite posh [Captain Paddy Williams, Blues and Royals]. There was the Scottish sergeant from Glasgow [Sgt Tommy Johnstone, Army Air Corps]. We had Cockneys, posh people and an Irish guy [Doug Beattie]. It was like a World War 2 war movie. The plucky English, and the class barriers came down. The

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[44] Plainly, the soldiers in Garmser were reacting to the spelling of Sean's first name, assuming he came from an Irish Catholic family. Parachute Regiment soldiers, massacred 13 unarmed, mainly Catholic, civilians in Londonderry in 1971, an event known as Bloody Sunday. Some of their former colleagues maintain they did nothing wrong, because they had been fired upon first.

> chemistry helped. With lots of other stuff, the chemistry wasn’t there. I never got such good stuff from other embeds’ (author interview).

By making himself useful Langan turned into something more than a neutral observer. ‘At the start of the battle I was acutely aware of being a middle-class Southerner and a mistrusted member of the despised press. But by the end, I had been taken into the fold and treated like a brother,’ wrote Langan (2007b: 184). Beattie comments:

> ‘He [Langan] started off being this figure of ridicule or curiosity. But people gravitated to him. He had a great knack of listening. When he would ask the question, he would leave you to talk as long as you wanted. And when people wanted to talk or they were feeling fearful, Sean became an outlet. He was no longer an interloper. He was a colleague’ (author interview).

Langan later wrote that he believed Nato’s mission in Helmand was fundamentally misconceived:

> ‘I couldn't help feeling that here was Britain's grandiose foreign policy laid bare. Seventeen brave men in five un-armoured Wimmicks under constant fire in some godforsaken town. And if those RPGs had knocked out two of the five Wimmicks [Land Rover model used by the British army], the strategically vital town of Garmser -- the “Gateway to Helmand”, would have been lost to the Taliban once more’ (Langan 2007: 184).

In the end, the unit was ordered to withdraw. ‘That week felt like a lifetime. It came as such a shock to them when they were told to pull out. [. . .] They came up to me and talked’ (Langan, author interview). The officers told Langan, who was by now using a collective ‘we’ to refer to him-and-the-unit, that the soldiers felt the mission had been pointless:

> ‘[O]n the last day, as we prepared to leave Garmser, we didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The Afghan police chief informed us that his men were planning to withdraw. The whole battle had been for nothing. The Taliban would be able to walk in and take Garmser on a plate. We sunk to our knees and stared into space. We'd won the battle, but it felt like Britain was losing the war’ (Langan 2007b: 185).

Beattie talked to camera about his unhappiness with the decision to order the unit out of the area and felt their efforts had been in vain. As Beattie put it later in his memoir: ‘I even got on to politics, grumbling that MPs and government had no idea how their policies affected men on the ground’ (2008: 182). Langan had never heard an army officer talk like this about an operation and, concerned that the interview might end Beattie’s career, offered to delete it (author interview with Sean Langan).

‘Three men received medals but felt like we were losing the war,’ Langan said in voice-over at the end of the film. Having failed to exclude Langan, the Army came to see that his report promoted the heroism of the British soldiers: 'The MOD liked it because the soldiers came across so well,' Langan told me (author interview). Several of the officers were awarded medals. Beattie was awarded the Military Cross in December 2006 (Anon 2006, BBC 2007); acting Captain Tim Illingworth, of the Blues and Royals, the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (Anon 2006); and Tootal received the Distinguished Service Order (Anon 2006). Beattie told me he believed this was probably the most decorated British army mission since Andy McNab's 'Bravo Two Zero' patrol (McNab 1998: 396-398) in Iraq in 1991 (author interview).

5.2.3. Langan Discussion

Langan had no contact with the local inhabitants, so his sources were exclusively the soldiers to whom he was attached:

- Primarily, the British officers on location in Garmser, foremost among them Captain Doug Beattie
- The Afghan police and army soldiers

As Morrison and Tumber noted in their study of reporting in the Falklands (1988), accredited journalists become emotionally attached to 'their troops'. In the process they psychologically travel from their accepted role of journalist-as-observer to that of journalist-as-participant (see chapter 6). Langan told me he was deeply moved by the bond he had formed with the troops in Garmser:

> 'We became close friends. I remember [afterwards] dining out with the Scottish sergeant and the highest-ranking NCOs and sergeants from all over the British army. It was one of my proudest moments. They brought in the colours and toasted other people, and they toasted me for showing such valour. It was really amazing after my kidnap' (Langan author interview).[45]

Tomalin summarises the benefits of the approach taken by reporters like Langan when constructing their reports. He wrote: '[O]ur side is the right side, but it is fighting the war in the wrong way. Ever since William Howard Russell sent his dispatches to *The Times* about the Crimean War, this has been a rewarding attitude for war correspondents to adopt' (Tomalin 1975: 89). Eason characterises the ambiguous relationship journalists have with their institutional sources as 'disobedient independence' (Eason 1988: 221). According to this view, reporters rely on official sources to lend authority to their published accounts while simultaneously proclaiming their independence from them and asserting their role of watchdogs, alert to the abuse of power. As Eason puts it:

> 'Dependent upon governmental authority for its conventional coverage and disobedient to the same authority in its exposés, the press advertise[s] its own freedom and

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[45] In March 2008, Langan was kidnapped along with his fixer Sami in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region by tribal people connected to the Taliban, while filming for another Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme. They were freed three months later.

independence from government while remaining conventionally bound to that authority for the bulk of its news' (1988: 221).

In his study of the coverage of the Vietnam war, Hallin concludes that television, a literal medium, is attracted to violence as a means of dramatising events but less good at analysing policy matters. The result is that TV reports of conflict normally downplay the significance of important contextualising material that is hard to film on location (Hallin 1986: 108-110). The negotiation between Knaggs and Langan fits well the classic social science model of the symbiotic reporter-source relationship (Gans 1979, Sigal 1973, Fishman 1980) where officials in London accredited Langan, took it away, but the senior officer, Colonel Knaggs took it upon himself to reinstate his access in return for exposure for what he hoped would be the good works his troops were undertaking.

5.2.4. Section summary

Langan's case is another which in the absence of formal control by officials on the ground demonstrates how the reporter constructed his relationships with the members of his interpretive sourcing community. In this, he resembles Labouchère's approach. That is, once the senior officer on the ground had granted Langan access in order to publicise what Knaggs felt was the important work being undertaken by the British army in Helmand, Langan had unusual freedom to work. As such, it does not fit well with the classic social sciences view of official sources as primary definers. However the interviews I conducted for this case study with the officers on the ground demonstrate their agency and an ability to exercise their own judgement in the face of strict news management from London. This case again demonstrates the benefit of case studies as a research strategy that goes beyond theory to explore some of the individual human motivations behind negotiations over journalists' access to events.

5.3. Tim Whewell in Georgia (2008)

The final case in this chapter concerns a series of investigative reports for the BBC by the BBC reporter Tim Whewell on the true causes of the short war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 over the disputed territory of South Ossetia. In October 2008, after the conflict had ended, Whewell obtained permission from the Russians to visit South Ossetia, the sovereign Georgian territory that Russia had occupied, for the good reason that no international reporters had so far been there and the reporting of the war by international news reporters was extremely one-sided, all being conducted from Georgia. A feature of this case, just before the widespread adoption by local people and foreign news journalists of social media in areas of conflict, is how many of the basic facts were missing including who started the conflict, the timing of events and, in view of the lack of eye-witness testimony from the territory Russia occupied, hard evidence about what had occurred during the fighting.

5.3.1. Whewell Method

Whewell's multimedia news outputs were my primary source, that is the stories Whewell produced for, respectively, the BBC website, the BBC TV current affairs programme *Newsnight*, the BBC Radio 4 programme *File on 4* and one for *New Statesman* magazine (Whewell 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). And I have reproduced here the exchange, published online, in the personal blogs of his two fixers, trained journalists selected by Whewell on the basis of their contacts within, and membership of, the communities whose armed forces were doing the fighting. I interviewed Whewell by email about this aspect, of which he was unaware. When Whewell checked with Nick Sturdee, the Russian-speaking cameraman with whom he worked, he was also not aware that the fixers had fallen out over the fairness and impartiality of the reports they had worked on. As with all the reporters in the case studies, the interviews were semi-structured. I knew beforehand which areas I wanted to examine but was open-minded about how to allow Whewell to open up about his working practices and how he managed to remain impartial. He had been guided by locally-hired colleagues who had been hired precisely because they were part of the communities the team was filming. His fixers' furious disagreement online prefigures some of the debates on social media between partial, partisan source intermediaries later in the thesis. The methodological point here is that the Whewell's two younger fixers are members of the 'born-online' generation. As such, they found it perfectly normal to conduct what could have been a sensitive discussion about the impact of their boss's sourcing practices on the fairness and accuracy of the story on which they had all worked, in real time and on social media, with its potentially vast audience.

5.3.2. Whewell Findings

According to the subsequent definitive report published by the EU (Tagliavini 2009: 19), hostilities in the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 started on the night of 7-8 August with a 'massive Georgian artillery attack' on Russian troops in South Ossetia, a Georgian region which had been occupied by Russian 'peacekeepers' since a conflict in the 1990s. At the time, the international news media had, however, given a rather different impression of who started it. They had, wrongly, blamed the Russians. Hours after the Georgian army had opened fire on the capital Tskhinvali, Russian tanks and 40,000 troops invaded South Ossetia early in the morning of 8 August through the Roki tunnel. Over the course of five days, the Georgian army was expelled from South Ossetia, with Georgian civilians ethnically cleansed from their villages (Asmus 2010: 185). As is so often the case in conflict reporting, the antagonists disagreed about many of the basic facts of what had happened. Both sides made strenuous efforts using the international media to convince the wider world of the falsity of claims made by their opponents. Foremost was the question of who had started the war. The *New York Times* eventually reported that neutral observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) had secretly briefed diplomats in Tbilisi that there was no evidence the Russians had shelled Georgian villages south of Tskhinvali — supposedly the reason the Georgians had shelled Russian military positions in the South Ossetian capital (Chivers and Barry 2008). The same international observers also blamed the Georgian army for initiating major hostilities, by firing notoriously inaccurate Grad missiles (de Waal 2010) at civilian areas of Tskhinvali where the OSCE office was located. The other important disputed fact was a supposed massacre of civilians by the Georgian military. On 10 August, the state-backed Russian news organisation called Russia Today (now RT) reported that the Russian ambassador in Tbilisi had said at least 2,000 people, including 'many children' had been killed (RT 2008). The EU report eventually gave the true figure as 162 (Tagliavini 2009: 21).

During the conflict, elite Georgian sources claimed that the Russians had planned to, and did, provoke Georgia in order to provide a pretext to invade. The role of the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili was notable. He claimed Russia had started the war, making himself available to international news organisations when the shooting started, speaking fluent, idiomatic English. The former BBC reporter, Angus Roxburgh, then working as a Russian expert adviser to the Russian government at GPlus, a Brussels-based subsidiary of the New York public relations agency Ketchum, wrote that Saakashvili 'was on TV non-stop from the very first day, claiming Russia had started it; Russia took so long to catch up that no one believed him' (Roxburgh 2017: 309). 'Russia has no politician who can perform as engagingly for the Western media (in fluent English, to boot) as Saakashvili,' commented Whewell (author interview). In both Russia and Georgia, the local media pumped out propaganda that painted the other side as the aggressor. Most of the population on both sides of the conflict took its information about the fighting from their country's partisan television coverage. For its part the Georgian intelligence services took Russian websites and TV channels off air from 11 August, ostensibly due to them broadcasting lies and disinformation which was disquieting the population (Akhvlediani 2009: 370).

The closest international correspondents were based in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, a media hub for international news organisations in the South Caucasus who cannot operate in the Russian-controlled regions to the north because of reporting restrictions which remain in place since the Islamic insurgency in Chechnya in the 1990s. The disposition of international correspondents at the outbreak of hostilities was important because almost all the reporting by international correspondents of the war was done from the Georgian side. However, reporting from the losing side was a huge disadvantage for the news organisations since the area controlled by the Georgians shrank rapidly, meaning the international correspondents failed to witness the fighting. The BBC's then foreign editor Jon Williams acknowledged this, complaining in a blog about the lack of access to international reporters:

> 'Not until Wednesday — six days after the first shots were fired [i.e. 13 August] — was a BBC team able to get in to see what had happened for themselves, and then only in the company of Russian officials. It's clear there's been great suffering in both Georgia and South Ossetia, but it's proved impossible for us to verify that figure of 2,000 dead [...] And for people, like journalists, who deal in facts, that means war is dangerous, dirty […] and frustrating' (Williams 2008).

In Whewell's various reports he tried to find out when the massive Georgian bombardment had started, since it was the start of the war. He also verified that Grad missiles, which are impossible to target accurately, were used and this caused civilian casualties. Much of this information contradicted the Georgian narrative, Whewell told me. But it was a nuanced picture:

> 'Not everything we found in South Ossetia, as we tried to establish the timeline of the days around the outbreak of war, favoured the Russian version of events. We found harrowing evidence, included in the film, of the "ethnic cleansing" of ethnic Georgian villages in South Ossetia. The overall thrust of our reports was repeated almost a year later in the report of the EU commission of inquiry into the war headed by Heidi Tagliavini. But by that time, of course, the news cycle had moved on, massive amounts of Western aid had been given to Georgia, and most of the Western public almost certainly retained the basic understanding that "Russia started the war"' (author interview).

Also evident is Whewell's reliance on locally-hired staff in the field. In Whewell's case his helpers came from opposite sides of the conflict. Whewell's fixers, Tbilisi-based ethnic Georgian Sopho Bukia and the ethnic Ossetian Alan Tskhurbayev, based in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia. In the small journalistic world of the Caucasus, the fixers were also long-standing colleagues who worked together in the non-governmental news organisation, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR).[46] Tskhurbayev also took pictures which were published in the BBC's online version of the story (Whewell 2008a). The BBC insists that its reporters produce their news output with due impartiality. However, blog posts by his two fixers which they published in their blogs drew attention to their strongly partisan feelings. One by a delighted Tskhurbayev expressed his enthusiasm for Whewell's reporting in a blog post entitled 'The BBC blames Tbilisi (and I support them)' (since deleted). In it, he said Whewell's reports had corrected the previous — false — impression of who was to blame for the conflict. 'This is really very sharp, courageous and very detailed reportage,' wrote Tskhurbayev. 'I'm glad I participated in [its] creation'. It is perhaps understandable that the Ossetian was enthused that an international journalist was telling an important part of the story that until then had been missing. He continued:

> 'I saw how the attitude [of Tim Whewell and his team] towards the war changed [during their reporting trip]. I saw their sincere astonishment when the inhabitants of Tskhinvali told them about Georgian tanks shooting at their houses floor by floor. How other local people told us how they literally single-handed tried to stop those tanks, and succeeded. For them [the journalists] this was almost all new'.

However, Whewell's other fixer, Sopho Bukia, commented online that her colleague's blog about Whewell's report was misleading. Her post, also since deleted, was reproduced in a journal article by their boss at IWPR, Margarita Akhvlediani:

> '[The r]eportage is absolutely unbalanced, and it destroys all the standards me and millions on this planet respect [the] BBC for [. . .] I have no doubt that people in Tskhinvali went through terrible days in August, and the grief of that mother whose son died is unbearable . . . I didn't see in this reportage the grief of mothers from the other side of conflict, who lost children as well. There are hundreds of such mothers in both

[46] Colleagues working in the IWPR in Iraq feature in the next study chapter.

South Ossetia and Georgia. Does the BBC really suppose that it is possible to countervail the story of a woman who lost her son by the commentary of [the] minister of foreign affairs? In order to do that it is necessary to provide a story of another mother whose baby has been buried under the ruins of an apartment building in Gori after [a] bomb[ing] raid. There were many of them, what is needed is the desire to see them' (Akhvlediani 2009: 367).

Whewell responded:

> 'On balance, obviously there's a need in general not only to ensure that individual pieces are balanced, but that coverage of a topic overall is balanced. As regards the Russo-Georgian war, I think there's not much doubt that Western coverage (I talk overall, not specifically about the BBC) was quite unbalanced — in favour of Georgia, and against Russia. In the first place, it could hardly have been otherwise, even with the best of intentions, given that almost all Western journalists covered the war (physically) from the Georgian side' (author interview).

Until I told him of it, Whewell had been unaware of Bukia's unhappiness with his report. He responded:

> 'I am reluctant to have a nationalistic scoreboard of mothers' tears, but with reference to Sophia's complaint, the presence of all the Western crews in Gori meant that there will have been many, many more grieving Georgian mothers interviewed in August 2008 than South Ossetian mothers' (author interview)

5.3.3. Whewell Discussion

When viewed from today's standpoint, what is remarkable and significant about this relatively recent case (which is the final one representing 'the past' in the thesis) is that Whewell was accurately verifying for the first time the most basic questions about the war, such as who started it? When was the first bombardment and what and whom did it hit? When did the Russian army enter Georgia? How did either army conduct its operations in South Ossetia? As Matheson and Allan note, 'In retrospect, it is surprising how few news reports acknowledged that Georgian forces were the first to attack' (2009: 167). Morozov pointed out in an article entitled 'Where are the citizen journalists?' (Morozov 2008) that, judging by the absence of newsworthy information posted on social media, ordinary people on the ground had notably not answered these questions. Whewell told me:

> 'We were not covering the war when we made our programmes in October 2008 — it had been over for two months. We were trying to investigate exactly how it started. Much of the physical evidence and human testimony to answer that question was available only in Tskhinvali — which is why we wanted to go there' (author interview).

Whewell's principal sources for these stories were therefore:

- His two fixers, one from each side of the conflict

- Civilians on the ground who were being interviewed for the first time by an international reporter
- Elite government sources in Moscow and Tbilisi
- OSCE officials, previously based in Tskhinvali

This case is a further reminder in the thesis of the importance of foreign reporters' collaborative work practices, and their reliance on locally-hired fixers to locate and interview people on location.[47] Despite possessing a wealth of local knowledge it is significant that Whewell and Sturdee still found it vital to have local reporters helping them. Though he does not speak any of the Caucasian languages, Whewell is fluent in Russian, the *lingua franca* of the former Soviet Union, having reported on events there since the 1980s, and so is his producer/camera operator Nick Sturdee. However, writing about one of the Moscow fixers who aid international journalists, Palmer makes precisely this point:

> 'Interestingly, [one particular news fixer] told me that even if the correspondent happened to speak Russian, he or she would still need a fixer to help translate these deeper systems of meaning, pointing again to the broader implications of cultural translation' (Palmer 2019b: 1791).

During the conflict itself, for lack of better, verified facts from sources on the ground, the international media seemed to be filtered through a lens that recalled the Cold War. Writing about the way the media tended to support the conduct of the Vietnam war by the US government, Hallin comments: 'Mechanisms that maintain "control" or "consensus" lie in structures of consciousness and organisation that are larger than all the individuals involved, impelling them forward in ways they cannot control, [one being] the ideology of the Cold War' (1986: 24). As already discussed, the reporting of the Russia-Georgia war by international journalists was one-sided, most reports assuming that the Russians were the aggressors. As already noted in the case of the war in Vietnam, Hallin found that professional journalists' commitment to 'objectivity' also tended to make them rely 'not just on *any* facts. They were *official* facts' (Hallin 1986: 25).

5.3.4. Section summary

Whewell's news reports were published just before reporters and sources began to use social media to post and verify the evidence of disputed events. The online dispute between his fixers to some extent prefigures the subsequent passionate debates conducted by non-journalists on social media. This is where my research strategy of examining the behaviour of newsgatherers and source intermediaries in the field adds to our understanding of the reliance even of experienced foreign correspondents who have language skills and a deep knowledge of the local environment on locally-hired helpers.

5.4. Broadcast cases Discussion

The three cases in this chapter show reporters using dissimilar kinds of source networks. Alpert's report went to places no other international reporters reached, in order to interview civilian eye-witnesses about the effects of the US-led bombing campaign. His sourcing was patchily mediated by his minders — who tended to either be heavy-handed or were, inexplicably, absent. Several factors worked to Alpert's advantage. Since he was not feeding his news from Iraq by satellite but smuggled out his footage in secret, his minders could not know how they were depicted. Furthermore, the presence of Ramsey Clark must have made Alpert seem far less threatening to the officials, and easier to control, than the big-name international reporters in Baghdad who were the focus of worldwide attention. And by incorporating the government minders into the cut story, akin to some extent to the breaking the 'fourth wall' normally assumed in conventional television news reports, Alpert added a degree of transparency about the way he had sourced his story. It also allowed the officials to put over the government's version of events. The Gulf war in 1991 was the last major conflict before foreign news began the gradual switch-over from recording, transmitting and publishing using analogue technology, to using digital technologies to do all these things. According to the Channel 4 News reporter Alex Thomson, this was the last war which could be more or less sealed-off, before eye-witnesses started to share material online, thereby radically changing the environment in which news sourcing occurs, and the culture of reporting:

> 'Possibly this was the very last time governments had this complete control [of the reporting of wars]. It's hard to see those days returning. Which is brilliant for us. They now feel like the very last wars where dice could be loaded in favour of the military. We are always far too trusting of what the military can tell us' (author interview).

Langan was operating in a very different environment, more like that enjoyed by William Russell, in that he was free to work with the troops on whom he was reporting. Like Alpert, he also appears to have benefited from not doing daily news, and as a freelance and a solo operator seems to have exploited gaps in the thinly-stretched MOD Media Ops system at the start of the British deployment in Helmand, which was trying to manage events on the ground all the way from London.

By contrast, the various news reports Whewell produced for different BBC outlets drew on a wider range of sources, incorporating interviews with elite sources designed for them to comment on what he had found out from eye-witnesses on the ground. None of these case studies feature routine news events, which makes the newsroom ethnographies appear all the less relevant as a way of examining sourcing in news production. While scholarly studies of the broadcast period examined practices back at base (Schlesinger 1987, 1994) — a working culture described by Blumler as one characterised by 'responsible carefulness' (1995: 181). By contrast, these cases demonstrate different ways of ways of neutralising or evading news management by officials. From the point of view of the broadcast journalist, the exigencies of television in particular leave them vulnerable to news management by officials. If there is no access to sources there is no story. Rodgers writes: 'The [television] journalist's overriding concern is to get his or her material to their audience. Failure to do that within the deadline — whatever the reason — is total failure' (2012: 31). The journalists in this chapter working in broadcast news operated under somewhat different constraints from those experienced by the newspaper reporters in the previous one. By the latter half of the twentieth century there was a definite expectation that facts in news stories should be attributed to named sources. Franklin and Carlson call it the 'normalisation of attribution' (2011: 5). There is also more pressure on broadcast reporters than on print colleagues to secure telling quotes from sources who are prepared to go on the record. As Epstein points out, added to this television news reports require 'visual images of action' (1973: 266) — pictures of the things the reporter or the source is referring to. Thus, having to have sources prepared to go in front of the camera and be quoted on the record sets a high barrier for television journalists to authentically source their reports. The former ITN correspondent Mike Nicholson told McLaughlin:

> 'We have to do things that newspaper reporters aren't often called upon to do. They don't need to be at the frontline. Because we stand alongside a camera, we always have to be where it's happening, or at least we have to try to be where it's happening, whereas newspaper reporters can actually sit in a bar, can't they, and pick up gossip. They can go to the AP line, they can talk to us; there's so much the newspaperman can do that we can't do. We simply have to be there with our lens' (McLaughlin 2016: 31).

5.5. Chapter Summary: Broadcast Cases

The three cases in this chapter demonstrate broadcast journalists' particular vulnerability to control by official sources in the field due to the constraints of the technology. The cases address the first research question. They show television journalists' reliance during the period before digital technologies on empowered, helpful source intermediaries in the field. Working with such people was how the reporters evaded the controls imposed by their official sources on access to events. By doing so, sources on the ground helped shape the meaning of the reporters' news texts.

6. Iraq fieldwork (2010)

This is the first of three fieldwork study chapters exploring current sourcing culture in the field. The previous ones highlighted print and broadcast reporters' need for access to the battlefields on which they reported, usually requiring negotiations with media management officials over access. In the initial Introduction/Literature Review chapter, I drew attention to texts arguing that contemporary war reporters' former sources have targeted them because they no longer needed them (Matheson and Allan 2009, Cottle, Mosdell and Sambrook 2016, Picard and Storm 2016). In this one, I lay out fieldwork exploring the sourcing practices which conflict journalists in Iraq devised in order to mitigate unprecedented levels of risk after the US invasion in 2003. As in all these fieldwork chapters, I have applied my method to analyse how my tribe constructs news as a social network, and the changing ways in which professional reporters cooperate with others in their informal source networks. In these fieldwork chapters I have a brief method section, then articulate the findings and finish with a discussion about the significance of the case. Taken together, the three fieldwork chapters address research question 2.[48]

6.1. Iraq fieldwork Method

The reporter whose work I examine in this fieldwork is Neil Arun, a former BBC journalist. At the time of the research, he was working as an editor for IWPR, the non-governmental news organisation mentioned in the previous chapter. It operates in countries which do not have a tradition of independent, fact-based news reporting, and produces journalistic reports, often from areas of conflict, on press freedom, elections and security –- topics often covered only in brief by the international media. In the process of doing so IWPR also trains local reporters. IWPR is registered as a charity in the Netherlands and London, where it has its headquarters, and is a registered non-profit organisation in the US. Its mandate is to bring Western standards of transparency and accountability to public discourse in the countries in which it operates, publishing news stories on its website. Arun's reporting team at IWPR can tackle subjects in depth because his employers are not driven mainly by commercial concerns. Success for IWPR is not so much about building its own audience, but having its

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[48] This fieldwork was the basis for a panel discussion at the Frontline Club, and it was also published variously as follows:

1. Two short documentary films for the *Daily Beast* news website entitled 'A strange animal' (Pendry 2012a) and 'Raid in Kirkuk' (Pendry 2012b).
2. An article in the peer-reviewed journal, *Ethical Space* (Pendry 2011).

I organised and led an event entitled 'Are cheap, local hires saving or ruining foreign reporting?' presented to an audience of academics, frontline journalists and members of the public on 19 March 2012, comprising a screening and discussion, held at the Frontline Club in London. Available at: https://www.frontlineclub.com/are_cheap_local_hires_saving_or_ruining_foreign_reporting/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020]. At the event I showed a longer version of the *Daily Beast* film, which shows in more detail how the research was conducted. I use it as a teaching aid at my university (Pendry 2019).

stories picked up by the mainstream press (Arun, personal communication). IWPR cannot, therefore, be described as a mainstream international news organisation and it may appear that the obligation to provide training makes it an atypical organisation in the news business in Iraq. However, IWPR serves international and local media in different ways. Some of IWPR's freelances are local reporters who work for top international news organisations. And the product IWPR delivers must match the same standards of objectivity, impartiality and accuracy that is expected of other international media in Iraq. At the height of the insurgency after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, international journalists were mostly confined to their offices and depended heavily on local reporters. IWPR uses the same model by choice as a method to train local journalists. The empirical data produced in this case raise many questions about the ethical and practical problems of the way larger news organisations work.

The process of gathering and verifying data during the fieldwork was highly reflexive. This was partly because the participants were eager to explain how the mechanisms they employed to anticipate and manage the risks entailed in their reporting, but also because how I gathered the data — outsourcing my data collection to trusted intermediaries on the ground — so closely resembled the reporters' own news gathering practices. The participants' discussion about how they managed the ethical aspects of the news gathering and how the integrity of the data also reflected my own methodology. As noted in Chapter 3, my method combines interviews with participants and direct and indirect observation in the field. This case again draws on local knowledge. I chose this particular news organisation because Arun is known to me personally and this helped with my access to participants, which he negotiated with his superiors. The principal participants in the research were the various newsgatherers who sourced information and conducted interviews for the IWPR news report. They were:

- Neil Arun, based in Erbil in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, a full-time IWPR employee.
- Salman Adil Turki. Arun's Arabic translator and producer, Erbil, known as a 'local editor': effectively a translator, fixer and field producer. He was an Arabic speaker who works in the newsroom in Erbil with Arun liaising with reporters who do not speak English – in other words the majority of the freelance reporters working for IWPR.
- Uthman al-Mukhtar, an award-winning reporter who has worked for the *Washington Post*, *Sunday Times* and *Boston Globe* and IWPR in Fallujah on a freelance basis.
- Khalid al-Ansary, Baghdad reporter, like his colleague in Fallujah is a freelance who has worked for Reuters, the BBC and the *New York Times.*
- Two freelance camera operators in Baghdad and Fallujah, close colleagues of the local reporters above, whom I enrolled to film the reporters.

The filming was limited to one day in order to better coordinate the Iraqi reporters and their camera operators, and Arun negotiate the risks of the reporting. It was also more cost-effective. I interviewed one of the principal reporters, Khalid al-Ansary, by phone while he was filmed by the camera operator in Baghdad. Uthman al-Mukhtar, in Fallujah, requested that I supply him with a list of questions and he also then gave his answers in an on-camera interview. The fact that the camera operators also followed al-Mukhtar and al-Ansary as they worked meant I had a candid record of most of the interactions between reporters and their sources during their working day. The Arabic interviews were later time-coded and translated.

After I returned to the UK, Adil Turki conducted supplementary interviews on my behalf with local journalists who use similar sub-contracting techniques to work in Iraq for many of the same reasons. Adil Turki was participating in my research as well as doing this *pro bono* work for me so for the purposes of this thesis I feel I should flag up a theoretical conflict of interest. In practice there were no problems.

6.3. Iraq fieldwork Findings

At the time of the fieldwork Arun was based in Erbil, the capital of the semi-autonomous Kurdish-controlled region of northern Iraq. His role was, therefore, essentially the same as that of the reporters working for mainstream international news organisations in Iraq who had, as noted above, at the height of the insurgency in 2004-2006, rapidly and controversially trained locally-hired newsgatherers to report on their behalf. Like other international journalists in Iraq, Arun depended on locally-hired journalists and their sources within their own communities, who were often selected precisely because they were partisan, to gather news from the local population. IWPR's news gathering model requires Arun to rely on a nationwide network of local reporters, or 'trainees'. These are freelances, employed by a range of other news organisations, both Iraqi and international. Through working intensively with Arun, they are expected to improve their skills as reporters. In the news agencies local journalists work as stringers and often do not get the byline. In the case of IWPR, though the local reporter gets the byline, Arun steers the story more in the style of a conventional reporter than an editor. IWPR's editorial team of international journalists have held senior posts with top news agencies, newspapers and broadcasters. The local journalists have varying amounts of experience. Some work at fixer level -– they give logistical support to international journalists and have some ability to take notes and gather quotes. Others are experienced journalists who also produce copy for international news agencies. However, their work does not require them to produce much colour (descriptive writing) or context, and these are skills they are learning from Arun. These reporters have had to adapt their working methods to the extraordinarily dangerous situations they face. Arun said:

> 'Many of the best journalists we have are not trained journalists. There is no such thing as journalism school here. In fact, what we do is the nearest thing to journalism school. The best journalists here are often people who were trained in something completely different. They're scientists, they're engineers, some of them are doctors or lawyers. And they have skills that people who have been journalists throughout, who always knew that they wanted to be journalists, don't have. They have skills like being analytical or being respectful to an objective truth. So that's been the real surprise working here with Iraqis.

> It’s the fact that a lot of our finest journalists never set out to be journalists. They set out trying to do something else. Sometimes they were linguists. And their language skills got them into the orbit, into the axis of Western journalists. And gradually they developed a taste for the story, for working in journalism’ (author interview).

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Iraq after the 2003 invasion was the deadliest conflict for journalists ever, with 198 journalists, foreign and local, killed there up to 2019 (Committee to Protect Journalists 2019a). Though all kinds of independent reporters were targeted for kidnap and murder, as always, the overwhelming majority of the total killed in these years, 169 in all, were local newsgatherers. The years in which most reporters died in Iraq were 2006 (30 killed) and 2007 (28 killed). The result was that international journalists complained they were unable to report in the field on the anti-Coalition insurgency in Iraq or on anything else. The former BBC reporter Rageh Omaar said this called into question the authenticity of reporting in post-invasion Iraq. He said news organisations failed to adequately inform their audiences how their reports had been compiled:

> ‘Some of us, I feel, are engaged in some kind of a small fraud on the British public, the readers and viewers [. . .] I feel very uncomfortable that we are not putting a health warning on reports from Iraq because to not do so lends an enormous legitimacy. We are saying Channel 4 or the BBC or Reuters or ABC can vouch for this when individual journalists are not so certain’ (Burrell 2006).

In September 2004, the Baghdad bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, Farnaz Fassihi, sent a widely circulated private email to friends which was later published. In it, she explained that she had changed her reporting practices, limiting the time in dangerous areas to a few minutes:

> ‘I can’t go grocery shopping anymore, can’t eat in restaurants, can’t strike up a conversation with strangers, can’t look for stories, can’t drive in anything but a fully armored car, can’t go to scenes of breaking news stories, can’t be stuck in traffic, can’t speak English outside, can’t take a road trip, can’t say I’m an American, can’t linger at checkpoints, can’t be curious about what people are saying, doing, feeling. And can’t and can’t …’ (Fassihi 2008: 281).

International reporters in Iraq who wanted to report on events within the local population, as opposed to embedding with the Coalition forces, resorted to reporting techniques which put them at a distance from their sources, when the dangers for foreign reporters were extreme. The *Independent* reporter Robert Fisk called it ‘hotel journalism’:

> ‘More and more Western reporters in Baghdad are reporting from their hotels rather than the streets of Iraq's towns and cities. Some are accompanied everywhere by hired, heavily armed Western mercenaries. A few live in local offices from which their editors refuse them permission to leave. Most use Iraqi stringers, part-time correspondents who risk their lives to conduct interviews for American or British journalists, and none can

> contemplate a journey outside the capital without days of preparation [. . .] Rarely, if ever, has a war been covered by reporters in so distant and restricted a way [. . .] So questions are being asked. What is a reporter's life worth? Is the story worth the risk? And, much more seriously from an ethical point of view, why do not more journalists report on the restrictions under which they operate? During the 2003 Anglo-American invasion, editors often insisted on prefacing journalists' dispatches from Saddam's Iraq by talking about the restrictions under which they were operating. But today, when our movements are much more circumscribed, no such "health warning" accompanies their reports. In many cases, viewers and readers are left with the impression that the journalist is free to travel around Iraq to check out the stories which he or she confidently files each day. Not so' (Fisk 2005).

During the research period Arun, his local editor and the local reporters worked on an IWPR report that was published three weeks later, entitled *Iraqi Stalemate Stirs Militias* (al-Ansary and al-Mukhtar 2010). This was a story about the Sunni *Sahwa* or 'Awakening' militia, fighters whom the Americans had paid to fight their former ally al-Qaeda. The interviewees, therefore, had served in precisely the same insurgent groups who in the years after the US invasion in 2003 had been responsible for kidnapping and killing reporters. The government's concern had always been that they may switch their allegiance back to al-Qaeda. The fieldwork took place during the period after a parliamentary election on 7 March 2010 which was supposed to choose a Prime Minister and President. However, the result was inconclusive, leading to fears that the country would split once again along sectarian lines. Arun wanted to investigate whether paramilitary fighters -– then observing a ceasefire –- were planning to resume their violence. The principal sources were two *Sahwa* leaders, one in the Baghdad suburb of Adhamiya, the other in Fallujah, both previous centres of the Sunni insurgency and a commander from the Shia Mahdi Army militia, interviewed in Baghdad. The anonymous *Sahwa* leader in Baghdad said that his militia's ranks were under threat from the Shia-dominated authorities and from al-Qaeda. He warned his organisation would return to violence if Sunni Arab demands for political representation were ignored. Of these three official sources, only the Fallujah commander agreed to have his name made public. Zuhair al-Chalabi, the senior government official assigned to handle the *Sahwa,* was also interviewed in Baghdad. There were also vox pops (journalist jargon meaning short contextualising quotes that add colour to news reports) from named and unnamed sources in Baghdad and Fallujah. Al-Mukhtar's principal official source in the published story was a senior *Sahwa* commander in Anbar province, Sheikh Jassim al-Dulaimi, who demanded the reporter meet him alone. al-Mukhtar took a flak jacket with him and walked the last part along what al-Mukhtar described to me as 'a rugged farming road, easy [for those wishing him harm] to hide and full of surprises' (author interview). Car bombs in Baghdad also meant that it was difficult for al-Ansary to move around the city. In the footage it is also possible to see him on the telephone to Arun and then interview a leader from the militia. The man agreed to film a discreet interview in a car park off the main street. It was a dangerous place for al-Ansary to be, obvious when the car park attendant ran off when he heard al-Ansary speaking English to Arun on the telephone. The interviewee said that they were probably being watched by an informer for the security forces (see Pendry 2012a, at 1' 30" into the video).

All of the principal subjects of the research, namely Arun, al-Mukhtar and al-Ansary, had to learn how to manage their own security and that of colleagues. The way they dealt with these concerns exemplifies trends in the way the wider community of foreign correspondents and local reporters in areas of conflict manage risk in the years after 9/11.

It was standard procedure for a foreign news organisation working in Iraq at this time to employ unarmed, usually ex-military, security personnel to protect staff (Tumber and Webster 2006: 136-141). This was the case in the research setting in Erbil and it had the effect of constraining Arun's movements, and mine when I moved into the IWPR house. The IWPR security contractor had the final word over where we were allowed to go. Arun's constraints on his freedom to report were the subject of an article he wrote for the *Financial Times* (Arun 2009), for which he embedded with an Iraqi police unit searching for al-Qaeda terrorists in a village near Kirkuk. The security constraints under which Arun produced the article in this case are the subject of one of the short films I made which were published in the *Daily Beast* (Pendry 2012b). Arun explained that he had got into trouble with his employer when his superiors learnt he had gone to a dangerous area to do some freelance work in December 2008. As an editor employed by IWPR on a freelance contract, he was allowed to report for other news organisations but his insurance policy was paid by IWPR and if he had got into trouble it would be his main employers who would have had to get him out of it. However, Arun was trying to sell a story to the international media at a time when interest in a post-American Iraq was fading. When he originally tried to sell the story, the response was: 'It was a nicely written piece. We like what you've done. But it hasn't got any Americans in it' (Pendry 2012b). Arun went on a second raid early in 2009, on which he met American soldiers but on the second occasion he was aware that going on the raids was risking not only his safety, but also his editors' reputation, and hence his career with IWPR. Arun had also begun to suspect that without a strong professional reason to return to Kirkuk, his real reason for doing so was that it had become a seductive antidote to his desk job.

> 'When I told the office about the raid, there was a warning. I was told I shouldn't do this again because they felt I was endangering myself. Even though they said they understood my motives as someone who likes to report in his spare time but also as an editor who wants to understand the environment in which the reporters that he's commissioning have to work [. . .] As a reporter going out in Iraq, you have to be careful about who knows your movements. The fewer people who know where you're going, the better. That's an acceptable precaution [. . .] But there's also the precaution you need to take, I've since realised, within the organisation. You need to make sure other people aren't somehow held to account because they had foreknowledge of a risk you planned to take' (Arun, author interview).

At the time of the research Uthman al-Mukhtar lived and worked in his home town of the strongly Sunni town of Fallujah. A former centre for the anti-US insurgency, from

2014-2017, it was controlled by the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (now known as Islamic State or IS). It has always been one of the most dangerous places in Iraq to work as a journalist, whether international or local. According to al-Mukhtar: ‘Working in Fallujah is different [from] working in Baghdad or in Kurdistan [where Arun was based] When a journalist in Fallujah is beaten and humiliated it will go unnoticed, unlike in Baghdad where such incidents are given much attention’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview). At the time of the fieldwork, all those who entered or left the town through either of two possible gates had to have a pass and were questioned by the police. The year before, one of al-Mukhtar’s colleagues had left home and bought a gun in order to continue working, after a bomb had been left outside his house, apparently by a source who had been displeased by his work (al-Mukhtar 2009). Another colleague had been murdered, apparently for similar reasons. In his filmed interview al-Mukhtar, explained the precautions he took when reporting. al-Mukhtar said he informed the police chief or his wife where he was going and when he was expected back. ‘I tell them if I don’t call in two hours or three hours, or if my phone is switched off, then I am in danger’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview). The Fallujah reporter al-Mukhtar acknowledged it was ‘unfortunate’ (author interview) that he used five or six different identity cards, three of which were completely fake and the others which were provided by sympathetic employees of local media organisations. They included one for a Shia area, another for a Sunni neighbourhood, and so on. On the day of filming, al-Mukhtar said this was an effective way of avoiding difficult conversations with the insurgents he had been asked to interview:

> ‘Showing an ID of an international agency may get us killed or kidnapped so we use an ID of a locally endorsed media outlet. Of course, getting these IDs are only possible because of our good contacts here. If I report a story that needs a government source, I reveal my real identity. For some stories, like the one I am doing now, I say that I am correspondent of a Gulf-based TV channel to avoid [. . .] trouble with the insurgents’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview).

But al-Mukhtar in Fallujah believed without the work of local reporters such as himself there would be no reliable news from his town and that he, therefore, fulfilled an important role. International journalists are unable to walk down a street in Fallujah without being escorted by body guards, he says. Reporting like this is superficial. ‘If they interview an individual, they won’t get the whole truth. But we can, because we are in direct contact with people’s daily life and we understand everything about what they do’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview).

Other research participants also expressed concerns about their personal security. The last time Khalid al-Ansary had visited Adhamiya with a camera, a Sunni district of Baghdad which was until 2008 also a base for al-Qaeda (Antelava 2009), he had been threatened by paramilitary fighters. The situation in the area had improved greatly since then or he could not have undertaken the work, as he pointed out (al-Ansary, author interview). The reason Adil Turki, a native of Baghdad, was working in Erbil was that he was forced to relocate there with his family after making a documentary film in Baghdad that denounced insurgents who had threatened journalists. As an Arab he was in minority in Erbil, a Kurdish area. Nevertheless, the area was relatively safe, compared to the rest of Iraq.

On the day of filming, 10 May 2010, car bombs killed more than 100 people across the country so the political mood as described by the research participants was tense. However, IWPR staff judged it safe to allow the news gathering to proceed. I filmed Arun and his locally-hired staff in Erbil. Meanwhile, experienced news camera operators in the Adhamiya district of Baghdad and in Fallujah filmed the reporters as they worked. These are staunchly Sunni areas where support for the anti-US coalition and later Islamic State was strong.

The sub-contracting of their news gathering by Arun and the local reporters to professional and non-professional local newsgatherers was their main strategy to mitigate risk. *Washington Post* correspondent Rajiv Chandrasekaran, who was based in Baghdad after the invasion, called it 'journalism by remote control' (Shafer 2004). The empirical fieldwork in this case is, therefore, a way of exploring the nature of the knowledge procured by this technique, its scope and limitations, and this includes the difficulties of verifying the facts produced when journalists in contemporary areas of conflict work with different kinds of locally-hired journalists and other parajournalists, some of whom are selected precisely because they are partisan.

As already noted, the dangers facing Iraqi journalists during this period were extreme. It was unsurprising that as a result they often found it difficult to gather news. Iraqi reporters may find themselves in an unsafe situation because they are a Sunni who finds it risky to go to an area controlled by a Shia militia, or vice versa. Sometimes a reporter may offend a source: a journalist may have been previously threatened by a militia leader, politician or other powerful individual. Or it may be that the location of a story is so distant, and there are so many checkpoints, that it is not possible to get to a story in time (al-Mukhtar, author interview). 'International journalists have some kind of security immunity,' said al-Mukhtar (author interview). 'The police, the army and the government cannot touch them, unlike us. We are caught between the security forces and the militants with all their ugliness and extremism' (al-Mukhtar, author interview). This is well understood by the local reporters, who feel threatened by both terrorist groups and the security forces answerable to the government. In such situations, the news gathering rules normally taught in journalism school to ensure objectivity and the integrity of a journalist's fact-checking do not always apply.

One response was what one might call sub-contracting, for journalists of all types in Iraq to hand over responsibility for elements of a story to someone else who may not be a journalist. Reporters sub-contract their reporting for three main reasons: difficulty, danger and distance. Of these, Arun explained that danger is the most pressing element (Arun 2010). At its simplest, sub-contracting works by the reporter using the phone to request a source make some enquiries on his or her behalf. For example, al-Ansary's work on the day of filming did not end in Adhamiya; Arun requested he find out about tensions in Abu Ghraib, a dangerous Baghdad suburb notorious for its prison. Since al-Ansary was unwilling to go there in person he called an individual -- not a news professional -- to secure the information he needed. It had been a long time since a reporter worked in Abu Ghraib without careful planning. Like most Iraqi journalists, al-Ansary felt that the best way to gather news safely from Abu Ghraib was on the telephone.

> '[Sometimes the reporter's contact] doesn't want to step out into the street and accost a stranger, a neighbour, and ask him some politically leading questions [the answers to which] are then going to appear in the press,' explained Arun (author interview). Information that has been gathered in this way then goes back up the chain until it reaches Arun, who verifies the material and edits it into the finished piece. Individuals who are sub-contracted to produce news for a reporter like this may or may not therefore be professional journalists. The main purpose for participants in the process is to avoid risk. In particularly dangerous areas, this mechanism of handing the story on may continue several times until a person feels that it is safe to step out of their house and interview someone in their neighbourhood, often an individual that is known to them. The news that has been gathered in this way then goes back up the chain until it reaches the international journalist, and ultimately the news desk. The information for the story almost becomes like this thing that is transmitted through a circuit of relatively static reporters. It's like the way you see soldiers hauling sandbags when they are building a wall. They stand in a line and the sandbag gets passed from soldier to soldier to soldier' (Arun, author interview).

Arun's local Arabic-speaking editor, Salman Adil Turki, gave the example of a story featuring an insurgent (Adil Turki, author interview). The local journalist cannot go to the insurgents' neighbourhood because reporters working for international news organisations are widely believed to be spies for the Americans. So the reporter calls up a cousin or a distant friend living in the insurgent's neighbourhood and who probably of the same sectarian persuasion, either Sunni or Shia. That cousin will speak to an individual who is known to him. The cousin relays what he believes to be an accurate version of the questions Arun and Adil Turki had sent to the local reporter.

> 'Let's take an example. You're featuring a terrorist, a former insurgent or active insurgent and you can't go to their neighbourhood as a journalist [. . .] So you call up one of your contacts, a friend, relative. And then you give them the question which were sent originally by the local editor. The local editor [e.g. Adil-Turki] actually took it from the international editor [e.g. Arun]. So see, three steps before it reaches the contacts [. . .] Sometimes [. . .] they don't understand the questions. They get the answers, usually irrelevant and they get back to the reporter. Or the middle man between the local reporter and the source. The middle man doesn't get the meaning of the questions. So they don't ask the right questions. They get wrong answers [. . .] to the reporter, he usually sends them to the IWPR office in Erbil [. . .] We talk to the reporter again [and tell him] "Go to your middle man, give him these questions again." [. . .] It takes so long before you get [. . .] meaningful answers' (Adil-Turki, author interview).

But questions about what the information is going to be used for may be a sensitive subject so the cousin may also sub-contract the reporting to someone. In this way, says Arun, there is often a chain of connected sources who are all involved in the reporting:

> 'When he outsources the reporting to another reporter, another "reporter" [makes quote marks with hands], in effect a person who lives there, a cousin, a distant friend, that cousin will speak to his family, his relatives, to get the quotes, the vox-pops. Because once again, he doesn't want to be identified as a reporter. He doesn't want to step out into the street, accost a stranger, a neighbour, and ask him some politically leading questions that are then going to appear in the press — the answers to which are then going to appear. Because of [the] risk [to the questioner]' (Arun, author interview).

Since there is no direct contact between reporter and interviewee, everyone is protected. This is important because the role of the reporter is widely misunderstood in Iraq. Under Saddam Hussein, all journalists worked for the government. So Iraqis expect reporters to have an agenda. The idea that someone can go around asking strangers questions to write a factually accurate, impartial piece of news is not widely accepted (Adil Turki, author interview).

> 'Socially [in Iraq], a journalist is envisaged as a traitor working for the Americans or the Iraqi government. This is one of the misfortunes of this occupation; we try to give the impression that the journalist is an independent entity, a messenger who tries to report the truth objectively. Villagers, city dwellers, not all of them though, look at the journalist as someone who is loyal to the government, someone who is loyal to the US troops. When we try to explain to them that this is wrong, they say that the government and the American won't allow anyone to publish something that tarnish their reputation. And this is the reason behind the label that they attached to journalists' (al-Mukhtar, author interview).

According to Arun, the first safeguard to verify the integrity of the data obtained by the use of sub-contracting is working with reliable reporters, either recommended by international news organisations or whose credibility has been vouchsafed by another credible person within IWPR (Arun, author interview). The second defence, as he puts it, is to compare a story with what is already out there. Arun and his colleagues often commission other reporters to check details in the story. If he knows another reporter in the same town, he might have Adil Turki telephone him and enquire whether a certain shop mentioned in the story is on the street that the first reporter said it was (Arun, author interview). The story is spiked (rejected) if there are any suspicions that the story is not right. It might also be spiked if the story itself checks out -– but the way it was sourced is not transparent.

Sub-contracting or outsourcing of news gathering has some obvious potential problems. The main risk is that inaccuracy creeps in somewhere along the line and may be undetected. Sometimes a report that comes in from a local reporter just does not 'sound right'. Arun says that his instinct often tells him there may be a problem. 'Sometimes it just smells funny. It can seem too good to be true. You ask for something and you get exactly what you asked for' (Arun, author interview). 'For example, he may get a reporter who in one day manages to file vox pops from six parts of the city. Arun said: 'You wonder then whether he really did that reporting himself, or did he sub-contract out to someone else?' (author interview). In such a case, he simply asked the reporter how he acquired the quotations. The Erbil interview participants, Arun and Adil Turki, say they take precautions to make sure the information they receive is accurate. The mechanisms by which facts are verified and the news story in the particular circumstances of this case is constructed — by sub-contracting news gathering in the field — were largely hidden. An examination of these practices throws up numerous ethical dilemmas. It can be hard sometimes to work out exactly who is filing a story. Arun relates the example of an Iraqi reporter with reasonably good English, who telephoned one day to pitch what he called a 'cracking story' about some men from the powerful Shia militia group, the Mahdi Army, led by the cleric Moktada al-Sadr, who were running a motor workshop and car wash (Arun, author interview). This was an incongruous human-interest story about members of paramilitary group. However, Arun has, to this day, never met the man who was offering the story. This person was a reporter –- and he obviously had excellent access to the Mahdi Army. So was the man with the car wash story a militia member? A relative of a member of the militia? Though Arun was keen to chase up the pitch, he questioned the reporter about where it came from. When the reporter did not answer the questions, he decided to spike the report. Arun says that the reporter may have felt his links to the militia could have endangered him, but for Arun there was no easy way of telling who he really was, nor to what extent he was objective (author interview).

As a rule, Arun says, his reporters are prohibited from sub-contracting their stories. It is permitted only in exceptional cases, where a reporter has no other means of gathering the information. Then too, only the most reliable reporters are allowed to use the method -— and only under the careful supervision of the editors. Material gathered in this way will be attributed clearly in the published story, for instance to sources interviewed over the telephone. While IWPR's editors place tight curbs on sub-contracting, they learn from local journalists who come to them for training that the practice remains relatively widespread in the Iraqi media. The interviews with participants reveal that sub-contracting sometimes comes unstuck because the reporter's contact simply has not understood the questions. There are just too many links in the chain. Turki says when this happens, he goes back over the questions once more with the journalist: 'We go back to the reporter again and say: "Go back to your middle man, give him these questions again"' (Arun, author interview). This can be time-consuming. There are other problems. It is difficult to get across the nuances of questions which are emailed to local reporters –- let alone where third parties are involved. It can be difficult to go beyond the tribal and sectarian loyalties of the local reporters. In the ethnically divided city of Mosul, for example, Arun has used both Arab and Kurdish reporters. At times of high tension in the city, it was harder to get certain reporters to do a tough story on their own side. Arun admits that his less-than-perfect solution in this case was essentially to blend together the accounts of the two or more reporters, giving them both a byline. He hoped that the sum of the parts was objectively true when verified in this way:

> ‘There are times we didn’t run material because we suspected it was tainted. There was a case recently where I asked for some quotes on the American withdrawal. I asked a reporter in Baghdad to vox pop people about their memories of American soldiers on their streets. He turned up with a telling quote, of an American soldier hurling a water bottle at a car that had got too close to his convoy — as a slightly violent way of telling it to back off. That event, I found out later, takes place in *The Hurt Locker*, which is available as a bootleg DVD across the country. I have no idea now whether the reporter saw *The Hurt Locker* and, instead of doing his own research, decided to put that rather cinematic event into the mouth of a person whom he interviewed. Or perhaps the person whom he interviewed saw *The Hurt Locker* and made it up, based on the film. Perhaps it happened all the time, because American soldiers were constantly using water bottles, short of using their guns, to keep traffic back. I have no idea. But those are the things that keep you awake at night after you’ve filed a story. You suddenly sit bolt upright in bed as you’re drifting off to sleep and wonder whether you’ve been had’ (Arun, author interview).

Some of the IWPR journalists did not accept that all the ethical international reporting standards are appropriate in Iraq because they did not fit with their sources’ expectations. For example, it is considered good practice in the UK for a reporter to tell the person that they are being recorded for broadcast. However, the participants all agreed this was unrealistic in the actual news gathering setting in Iraq. Adil-Turki, Arun’s local editor in Erbil, said:

> ‘If you tell them you’re going to record in advance they won’t be talking to you. They will basically cancel the call and that’s it. It’s trial and error. We started asking them. We tried to apply the international standard, at least with me and then they would do that, they would cancel the call and they would say, they would send a message: “Sorry we can’t continue, we can’t do this interview.” But I tried the other way round. Basically you will record the call and then before the end, you tell them, “I have recorded this interview. Is it okay with you?” And they say, “It’s fine”’ (author interview).

Another example of sub-contracting as a reporting technique came from the local reporter in Fallujah, al-Mukhtar: what he and his colleagues call the ‘Circle of Trust’. This is a network of trusted reporters who gather quotes on each other’s behalf (interview, al-Mukhtar). On their own initiative al-Mukhtar and his colleagues helped each other to conduct news gathering either because of security concerns, or because the large distances they had to travel made it impractical to get to the scene of a distant event in enough time to cover the story properly. Anbar province, where Fallujah is located, covers a third of Iraq and each one of the numerous roadblocks set up at times of heightened tension might cause him to be delayed for hours at a time. ‘It would take me four hours with a speed of 140 km per hour to get to Rutba [an isolated, exclusively Sunni, town in western Anbar province and 366 km distant from Fallujah] to report on a story. By that time, there would be nothing to report. So, I resort to the Circle of Trust. It is a well-known term among my journalist colleagues’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview). To al-Mukhtar, objectivity is not at all an abstract concept but his own measure of the extent to which he, as a local person reporting on news events in his own area, is able to verify whether a source is telling the truth. Unlike a foreign reporter, al-Mukhtar is immersed in the daily life of the inhabitants and this understanding is itself part of the verification process. He said:

> ‘Any journalist working for the *NY Times*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times* or the *Guardian* or any foreign news organisation can’t walk down the streets of Fallujah freely. They can’t do it without being escorted by body guards. If they interview a citizen, they won’t get the whole truth. If someone lied to them, they can’t find out about it. While we can. Because we are in direct contact with their daily life and we know and understand everything about them. That’s why some international journalists have failed in reporting the truth from the Iraqi street, while the Iraqi journalist has successfully reported the truth in an objective way’ (author interview).

Al-Mukhtar indicates that he can only use the sub-contracting method selectively, given that his clients at international agencies are more likely to object to it than those at local outlets. ‘Editors in Baghdad [for whom I work] had serious reservations about us using this technique’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview). However, al-Mukhtar says he has reason to trust the people who report on his behalf and that the system works because his colleagues know what kind of interviewees he is looking for and the kinds of questions he likes to ask. In an interview recorded on camera, al-Mukhtar gives the example of needing to outsource a story about the killing of two al-Qaeda leaders in the area. He outsourced the reporting to a trusted colleague who was from the same town as the dead men. al-Mukhtar acknowledges that in this case the tone and possibly the quality of the reporting was changed because he was not present. ‘I have to admit the story wasn’t quite the same I would have filed if I had gone myself [. . .] If I had heard with my own ears the cries of the baby, or the moans...of the old man’ (al-Mukhtar, author interview). A generalised culture of sub-contracting with few controls operated in the Iraqi media during this time as a result of the way journalism had developed there, said Arun:

> ‘Journalists broadly speaking in Iraq fit into two categories, very broadly speaking. They are either commentators, which means they work for the Arabic or Kurdish language press and they are names, they have a column and they are paid for their opinion. They are valued as opinion-makers, as people who reflect a certain political point of view perhaps. The other category is the journalist who effectively functions as a kind of quote-gatherer. He might have worked for Western news agencies but his job has been to call up the police station and find out how many were killed, to find out, to get a quote from the magistrate, to call up the hospital and find out how many they’re treating after that bomb blast. So in between those two extremes, there are very, very few reporters. There are very few people who have the freedom of mind to go out there and report a story. They’re either commentators or they’re quote-gatherers, quote-harvesters’ (author interview).

He continued:

[What] we're trying to do is work with the reporters, to find reporters, to create reporters. And often the best reporters will come from both those categories. Sometimes you can turn a commentator into a reporter. More often you succeed in turning somebody who's been a quote-gatherer, a death-toll gatherer, into a reporter. The Arabic word for journalist is *sahafi*, which is closest to the English word, scribe. So there is no exact term in Arabic for a reporter, for someone who writes and records what he sees' (Arun, author interview).

Interviews conducted on the author's behalf by Adil Turki with Iraqi journalists, who have not worked with IWPR but work in local media, revealed more about how sub-contracting works in the local media. Among many Iraqi journalists, sub-contracting is viewed as nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, it appears to be a prized survival skill. However, it appears that there are also economic reasons for individual reporters to adopt the practice as well as the risks of on-the-ground news gathering. The Iraqi journalists contacted by Adil Turki also give pressure of work and the possibility of making extra money as reasons for sub-contracting. One Baghdad-based reporter, who wanted to remain anonymous because he was admitting to a technique which colleagues had kept hidden from their editors, does produce work on behalf of other colleagues. He supplies pieces for news websites, newspapers and television and says sub-contracting is widespread (interview conducted on author's behalf by Adil Turki). This journalist said people were more likely to subcontract-out interviews with people in the street than official interviewees -– who are more likely to sue. This reporter described sub-contracting as a pact between colleagues, hidden from outsiders. He said colleagues often asked him for what he described as 'small favours' such as talking to a soldier at a checkpoint or taking pictures for him while working on a security story with his camera operator (interview conducted on author's behalf by Adil Turki). Another Baghdad reporter, Saeed Ahmed, said: 'Some journalists outsource stories to immature journalists, although they know that these beginners might file bad copy' (interview conducted on author's behalf by Adil Turki). Ahmed's colleague was asked to interview families about damage to their property after violence in the city. His acquaintance sub-contracted the story out to two reporters, and it was eventually published under his byline.

6.4. Iraq Fieldwork Discussion

The fieldwork describes a diversified news ecosystem, where numerous participants are drawn into the news gathering and verification process. The verification mechanisms in this case all involved human interactions, for example between members of literal tribes in these communities or the journalistic 'tribe' of professional local and international reporters. But professional journalists' adoption of verification checks including triangulation from multiple sources appears to have resulted in more, not less, truthful news gathering. Paradoxically, some international reporters in Murrell's study had doubts about the authenticity of information gathered using locally-hired journalists but most of those permanently based in Baghdad reported that collaborative news reporting led to 'enormous benefits' (Murrell 2010: 132). Above all, international reporters benefited from their colleagues' local knowledge. The fieldwork studied the work of experienced locally-hired reporters, so can be considered best practice in a difficult environment. However, some sources within these discrete local communities may be as difficult for locally-hired newsgatherers to reach as for international journalists. My fieldwork also included an exploration of more informal source reporting networks, in which some participants were selected precisely because they belonged to one or other sects. The dilemma for the independent newsgatherer is that such source intermediaries are likely to be partisan and they are gathering information from like-minded, partisan, sources. Potentially partisan source intermediaries, therefore, delivered access to the local reporters who are somewhat outside the communities. This gives them a distance from the facts they were verifying but not always the access to the most authoritative sources. Applying the thesis methodology to this case identifies these informal newsgatherers as parajournalist helpers who are enlisted as adjuncts to professional reporters. The fieldwork in this chapter explores the advantages and disadvantages of sub-contracting news gathering to a range of parajournalists when reporting a modern insurgency. As such, it is the first of three fieldwork chapters covering contemporary conflict reporting practices which will answer my second research question.

Palmer and Fontan view the reliance of international journalists in Iraq after the invasion on fixers as undermining the role of foreign correspondents. The reasons they cite are the 'lack of depth of direct, personal knowledge of the context from which the events reported derive their significance, since the bulk of the information involved reaches the correspondent through multiple filters' (2007: 22). Traditionally, one of the most important services provided by frontline journalists has been their role as eyewitness. It is extremely valuable for a reporter to be able to say that he or she saw it with their own eyes. But when several people are responsible for constructing a story there is the question then of who 'owns' the truth of the story, as well as how is it possible to check whether information gathered by method is true. Perhaps it could be tempting to make something up rather than take a risk. And there is the question of whether local newsgatherers were necessarily transparent with their editors about how they sourced a story, in such a way that it was checkable.

In their study of the formal, contractual ways in which employers sub-contract news gathering to non-salaried staff, Örnebring and Conill write: 'Using outsourcing in a metaphorical sense waters down the term somewhat and also creates a bias for novelty' (2016: 209). However, Palmer writes of news organisations now outsourcing foreign news production to 'stringers, freelancers and digital activists to get images and information from places where they could not always afford to send their own news teams' (2018a: 16). This chapter's case study also explores how contemporary international reporters use helpful source intermediaries – parajournalists – to provide access to otherwise inaccessible areas of conflict. Inevitably, it contributes to debates about the changing nature of the foreign correspondent. Foreign reporters who do not speak the language and have good reason to feel threatened on the ground cannot achieve much on their own. How much a foreign journalist can ever understand his or her fixer's motives and affiliations has long concerned international correspondents. BBC World Affairs Correspondent Allan Little distrusted some of the fixers he had to work with in former Yugoslavia. 'You can tell very quickly when someone's trying to spin you a yarn. I worked with one young woman in

Croatia who I could tell […] was partisan. There [were things] she was not translating and other things she was translating incorrectly' (interview by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar, 18 January 2011). These questions matter because they touch on the authenticity of the information gathered in this fashion and whether it is necessarily compromised. After all, an unreliable witness could just as readily lie to a foreign journalist as to a local journalist. Research participants pointed out that there are also some advantages in working like this, foremost among them being that like embedding, outsourcing news gathering keeps reporters away from those who would do them harm. Conditions on the ground provided ample evidence to all participants in the news gathering that it was essential for their personal security to avoid direct contact wherever possible with the insurgents whom they were interviewing, or in the case of the reporter using fake identity documents, to conceal his true affiliation and instead represent himself as a representative of a media network from one of the Sunni states, and therefore partisan.

Further interviews, this time with international reporters working for mainstream news organisations, confirmed that the BBC reporter Gabriel Gatehouse also had problems with stringers when he worked at the BBC office in Baghdad (2009-2010). Gatehouse checked a series of Reuters reports of a car bomb in another town and realised that the details he was receiving from his 'second source' were always identical to the first (Gatehouse, author interview). For whatever reason, the stringer was cagey about divulging his sources. 'You would intuit something was wrong because AP and AFP always had a different version of events from us. But with Reuters it was always the same,' says Gatehouse. 'So we had to find another source' (author interview). When news gathering on the street in Iraq became too dangerous for international journalists to conduct personally, John Burns, of the *New York Times*, said he believed that the growing use of local journalists merely made a problematic situation even more so. 'Reporting on any war at any time is difficult. These are new complications on top of old complications' (cited in Shafer 2004). In fact, international journalists have always relied on fixers and other locally-hired help. The former *Sunday Times* foreign correspondent Jon Swain describes fixers as indispensable (Swain 2009). Allan Little, of the BBC, says: 'Without fixers working alongside, I don't think we'd be able to function at all' (interview by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar). Little believes that in fact the use of fixers and locally-hired newsgatherers 'hugely strengthens' the traditional model of the foreign correspondent. '[Fixers are] still doing the same stuff they always did but they are doing something additional now as well. They are going by themselves to places we as Westerners can't secure access to. So they're doing more than ever' (interview by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar).

In Arun's case, the principal kinds of sources available to him and his reporters when using the sub-contracting technique were as follows:

- Members of the tribe or sect, who would pass on information in relays from others within the social group to the international reporter Neil Arun
- Iraqi journalists would arrange for colleagues to report on their behalf because of time, distance and physical barriers such as roadblocks
- Examples of the above include the 'Circle of Trust' in Fallujah

- And, in the Iraqi media but not IWPR, examples of unethical reporting to save time

This work therefore clarifies the collaborative nature of news gathering under international editor Arun, with local reporters and a variety of non-professional source intermediaries all playing a part. Source intermediaries selected to undertake news gathering on behalf of the individuals making up the reporting 'chains' were selected precisely because they were members of the communities to which the insurgents belonged. Indeed, they were often chosen by the local reporters because they were explicitly sectarian. As the supplementary interviews with other news professionals have shown, this is a typical practice within the Iraqi media. The research in the following fieldwork chapter on reporting in Syria was conducted at a time when reporting became even more dangerous and the study examines the distorting effect this risk on the ground had on news gathering processes and the institutional effects on the international news organisations. Kamaran Najm, who contributed images to the multimedia film I produced for the *Daily Beast* (Pendry 2012b), was captured by Islamic State group in June 2014 and at the time of writing remains missing.

6.5. Chapter Summary: Iraq Fieldwork

This first study chapter of fieldwork begins to address research question 2 by shifting the focus from sourcing strategies of 'the past' to those of 'the present'. It describes the responses of journalists and non-journalists in the field in Iraq to their targeting by former sources for kidnap and murder. The principal finding is that the professional reporters, operating in extremely adverse conditions, formalised their informal sourcing networks as far as possible. However these were already populated with often explicitly sectarian source intermediaries to whom they sub-contracted or outsourced their news gathering, nearly always to distance themselves from potentially dangerous local actors. The case can, therefore, be read as a description of the ways in which professional newsgatherers policed the boundaries between them and their non-professional helpers.

7. Syria fieldwork (2013)

The previous chapter examined a specific sourcing technique devised by reporters in Iraq, that of sub-contracting their news gathering to professional and amateur local news gatherers in their field, as a response to risk. This was widely employed by international reporters in post-2003 invasion Iraq. I found it tended to protect international reporters in theatre from being targeted for kidnap and murder but problematised the verification of information from their sources on the ground. In this second fieldwork chapter, I widen the analytical lens to examine news organisations' response to an even more dangerous situation in Syria, from which many international reporters had absented themselves after the death of the celebrated *Sunday Times* reporter Marie Colvin in 2012. The fieldwork was originally conducted, again because of the risk not in Syria itself but on the border with Turkey near Aleppo.[49] For the purpose of the overall comparison of staff reporters' sourcing techniques in this thesis, in this chapter I will focus on the sponsorship by the *New York Times* reporter Chris Chivers of the blogger Eliot Higgins, as the latter emerged as a notable player in the sphere of digital news gathering. Higgins verified information for professional reporters in Syria unable to secure access to events on the battlefield.

7.1. Syria Fieldwork Method

This chapter investigates the composition of a diverse new reporting ecosystem in Syria. As in the other fieldwork study chapters which address sourcing practices of 'the present', this is a mixed-methods news ethnography. This section explains how I collected data during the fieldwork. In order to understand the apparently paradoxical situation where news organisations appeared to be increasingly relying on freelance copy after the death of Colvin but were unwilling to take responsibility for these journalists, I framed this as an enquiry into the impact of the legal and moral duty owed by employers to freelances working for them known as duty of care, a longstanding legal obligation and tort under the jurisdiction of under English and United States civil law. Debates about how this applies occur at all levels of the news industry and money does not have to change hands to prompt concerns that one is taking responsibility for someone if they supply goods and services. Nor are legal professionals usually involved in such discussions. Few freelances ever sue news organisations over their failure to provide a reasonable duty of care –- photographer Tim Page, who won a case against *Time* magazine in 1981, remains a rare exception (King 1981) and there has been no recent test in court of how far duty of care extends to international freelances and locally-hired journalists.

I first solicited the views of international staff and freelance journalists then reporting on the Syrian conflict on a widely-used closed Facebook group on which these reporters shared logistical information useful to reporters working in Syria. This comprised a short survey of freelance journalists working in Syria in May 2013. To do this, I appealed for help from

[49] A version of this fieldwork was published in the journal *Ethical Space* (Pendry 2015).

freelances who were having difficulties negotiating the sale of their work as a result of the increased risk of reporting there. The original request was made in a closed Facebook group for journalists working in Syria. The Channel 4 foreign news reporter Inigo Gilmore, a friend, posted a request on my behalf in the group and subsequently vouched for me with the administrator, Peter Bouckaert, at this time Emergencies Director of the rights group Human Rights Watch. Gilmore's post can be found in Appendix 3 of the current thesis.[50] All those who responded then took part in I follow up interviews conducted by email, phone and Skype while the integrity of the reporting of an apparent Sarin gas attack by government forces on the rebel-held area of Ghouta became the focus of an unfolding news story.[51] The individuals from the Facebook group who took part in the research were:

- 19 international (i.e., non-Syrian) journalists working in print, online, radio and television. These freelances work for a range of news outlets, including the international news agencies (Associated Press [AP], AFP, Reuters), the BBC, *Die Zeit*, a range of Austrian news outlets (*Wiener Zeitung*, *Profile* magazine and the Austrian broadcasting corporation ORF), VICE News, Channel 4 News, CNN, Sky, al Jazeera, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Guardian*, *Rolling Stone*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *VICE* magazine, the New Zealand *Herald on Sunday* and Swiss radio SRF.

At the time the research was conducted the Facebook group had 932 members, including workers in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other specialists, such as chemical weapons experts. As in the Calder case with the local fixers in the Blitz, these individuals can be seen to comprise an interpretive community. In this instance, most of the group members were journalists. As Murrell points out in a study of another a much larger closed group on Facebook called 'The Vulture Club' (Murrell 2014), which I also joined and used as a resource, such online groups have replaced the hotel bar as a safe space and in areas of conflict where information can be exchanged frankly in a private setting. The members of the online logistics group used their real names online, presumably in order to put to rest any doubts about disinformation which might otherwise be spread anonymously. (The group was eventually closed by Bouckaert in February 2015 because information was leaking out.)

I ultimately also contacted and interviewed the following staff journalists, some of whom are named with their agreement below, who either reported the Sarin gas attack and its aftermath, had until then been working regularly inside Syria at this time or were responsible for managing reporters working there:

- Seven staff correspondents based in London and Cairo, working for the BBC, the *Daily Telegraph*, Channel 4 News and Reuters.
- Six editors working for CNN, the BBC, AP, AFP, Reuters, the *Sunday Times* and the *Guardian*.

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[50] The appeal for help on Facebook can be found in Appendix 3.

[51] I heeded the up-to-date security information on the site when on my fieldwork. The town of Kilis was an important staging post for foreign Jihadist fighters travelling into northern Syria at this time.

Interviews were then conducted by telephone, email and using social media. Facebook was by far the most useful social media site for conducting interviews. Murrell (2014) found that war reporters and their collaborators use Facebook to conduct their reporting and discuss aspects of their work. When I started the fieldwork, it was not always clear to my respondents that their colleagues were in fact being kidnapped as some of the families of the missing journalists, and their employers the news organisations, were observing news blackouts, often on the advice of risk management and kidnap contractors who had been hired to find the missing journalists.

Two of the interviews with international freelances and one with a staff reporter subsequently led to face-to-face interviews in London. I conducted one face-to-face interview in Turkey with a cameraman/director who works for Channel 4. I also questioned the *Sunday Times* news executive Sean Ryan, who had been Colvin's foreign editor, at an event at the Frontline Club in London to follow up an earlier phone interview. The face-to-face interviews often tended to be longer and more wide-ranging than the interviews on Facebook but that was mainly because having made the effort to meet in person it seems natural to spend time establishing trust and the basis of the conversation. In the end I clarified many points arising from the longer interviews by following up with brief exchanges with interview participants either by email or on various social media platforms.

From 12-21 August 2013, I conducted fieldwork on location in the Turkish border town of Kilis. This had been conceived as ethnographic research inside another interpretive community, this time of international freelance journalists working in Aleppo, who used Kilis as a rest hub and to exchange information. I had planned to interview international reporters leaving Syria about their work. However, when I arrived in mid-August 2013 none were in the town. It became clear that reporters were staying away from the area because a number of them had disappeared, presumed kidnapped by jihadist groups. Most of them were freelances; the majority of the international journalists murdered by the terrorist group Islamic State over the next 18 months had passed through Kilis. As a result, while on location in Kilis I interviewed local fixers and taxi drivers who had been taking reporters in and out of Aleppo in the early stage of the conflict[52] in order to better understand the environment in which journalists were then operating. These were loosely-structured contextual interviews were done in person on the spot and were later published in the journalism trade paper *Press Gazette* (Pendry 2013a). One of the taxi drivers had had two groups of journalists kidnapped from his vehicle. These individuals all spoke sufficient English to render translation superfluous for the purposes of background material.

While on location on the Syrian border the situation changed rapidly in September 2013, after the apparent poison gas attacks in Damascus which were illegal under international law — and both the Obama administration and the UK government deliberated about whether to intervene directly. This led to the second strand of the research, as a combination of local witnesses and the amateur weapons blogger Eliot Higgins filled the gap left by an absence of foreign correspondents on the ground, and the consequent implications for sourcing in foreign news. For the purpose of the global comparison of changing reporter-source relations in this thesis I have widened the scope of the original fieldwork by describing the 'discovery' by the *New York Times* staff reporter Chris Chivers[53] of the hitherto unknown Eliot Higgins,[54] and Chivers's promotion of him to the news audience. Higgins had devised a novel technique for transparently crowd-sourcing analysis of eye-witness material from posts on social media and he emerges as a key parajournalist in my study. This is a point where my methodology makes a further contribution, by describing how Higgins established his authority as a source intermediary, or parajournalist, by working closely with professional journalists. This points to why my overall examination of novel online sourcing techniques matters, and more examples of Higgins's work with staff journalists will be examined in the following study chapter.

7.2. Syria Fieldwork Findings

In this section I examine the fieldwork findings which address research question 2. The fieldwork combined work on location, follow-up interviews and an examination of innovative sourcing techniques in the digital sphere. The first findings relate to the reluctance of news organisations to work with journalists in the field; I then examine how they dealt with a major news story, the gas attacks in Ghouta and the role played by Eliot Higgins, conceived in my methodology as a novel kind of source intermediary, a parajournalist, who was from the beginning keen to work with professional reporters. This fieldwork was originally devised to explore the reluctance of news organisations to send staff reporters to work in Syria after the death by shelling in Homs, in February 2012, of Marie Colvin. Her death was a major event for the tribe of international conflict reporters, and I explore its significance below. In the absence of professional staff reporters, others filled the gaps. By early 2013, comparatively junior international freelance members of the foreign news reporting tribe were publicly complaining that while their employers, the UK news organisations, were reluctant to send their staff reporters to Syria after Colvin's death and tended to rely on freelances to fill the gap, the same media companies stated they were unable to assume responsibility for their wellbeing when working there. The membership of the tribe is much more diverse now, according to Palmer:

> 'Though the Anglophone news industry most often tends to narrativise the tragedies faced by white, western conflict reporters, at the level of production there is no strictly "American" or "British" or "Canadian" practice of war reporting. News outlets based in these nations often employ people from various Anglophone countries, complementing

[53] Chivers is best known in the tribe for his extensive on-the-ground reporting in areas of conflict in the years after 9/11. He reflected on his *modus operandi* in Warren (2015).

[54] During my time on location on the Syrian border it became apparent that in the absence of reporters on the ground Higgins, who initially posted material in the guise of the anonymous blogger Brown Moses, had become an authority on important disputed aspects of the conflict, including the Syrian government's illegal use of cluster bombs, the use of so-called 'barrel bombs' and most importantly who was responsible for the gas attacks in Ghouta in August 2013. Afterwards I invited Higgins to speak about his work at my university in November 2013, and at the Frontline Club in London in January 2014. The latter is available at: https://www.frontlineclub.com/the-changing-face-of-news-gathering/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

any purely "national" perspective. Second, even the more vaguely termed "western" conflict correspondence is an inherently transnational practice, one that relies heavily on the collaboration with stringers, freelancers, translators, drivers, "fixers" and even staff correspondents from various cultural backgrounds' (2018a: 13).

Colvin's death had an immediate effect. A producer for CNN, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the rules of engagement between international freelances and their clients, the news organisations, had changed. 'When Marie Colvin was killed, it scared the shit out of a lot of [news] executives' (author interview, 24 October 2012). Her own newspaper told the UK-based freelance photographer Rick Findler that, though he had previously worked for them in Syria, they would no longer take his work, nor that of any other international freelances (author interview). Later, a *Sunday Times* executive told a reporter from *Press Gazette* that neither it nor its sister paper, *The Times*, would be accepting contributions from international freelances working in Syria (Rodgers 2013). According to the executive quoted in the article, the *Sunday Times* did not want to encourage freelances to take risks:

> 'After submitting pictures from Aleppo this week Rick Findler was told by the foreign desk that "it looks like you have done some exceptional work" but "we have a policy of not taking copy from Syria as we believe the dangers of operating there are too great". Findler, 28, has been published before in the *Sunday Times* and has been to Iraq, twice, Libya and this is his third trip to Syria. He said: "Surely it is that photographer's decision to choose whether or not they take the risks. I thought part of photography was the fact that some people in this world do take exceptional risks to show the rest of the world what is happening. I just don't know what else to do any more. I really feel disheartened and extremely let down"' (Rodgers 2013).

Four other British newspapers, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, *The Times* and the *Observer*, then also went on the record to *Press Gazette* to say that they too would not be taking the work of independent journalists (Turvill 2013).

The reluctance of news organisations to take responsibility for the freelances on whom they increasingly relied for the day-to-day reporting of the war in Syria had become an urgent problem. At the time of the fieldwork, it was becoming clear that numerous colleagues were disappearing, presumed kidnapped, in areas held by rebel forces in northern Syria. As a result, international news organisations pulled their staff reporters out of Syria. The kidnapped journalists whose employers or home governments did free them by paying a ransom were later murdered by Islamic State (Harkin 2015). As will be seen, for this and other reasons the summer of 2013 was a pivotal moment in the Syrian conflict, when the US and UK almost went to war there. Colvin's death and the kidnapping crisis of 2013 led to concerns that the conflict was being inadequately reported. A researcher for the Committee to Protect journalists described Syria at this time as 'an information black hole' (Stern 2014). In the period before the fieldwork, Syria was largely a freelance's war. The number of journalists killed between 2011 and 2014 bears this out. Nearly half of the 87 journalists killed or missing in the Syrian conflict at that time were freelances (Committee to Protect

Journalists 2019b). As ever in most of the post-World War Two 'new' wars defined by Kaldor (2012), the greatest risks in these years in Syria were run by local newsgatherers, whatever contractual arrangements they had with their employers. The same authoritative research from the Committee to Protect Journalists states 72 of the 87 killed or missing journalists in this period were locals. The erstwhile *New York Times* Baghdad and Kabul bureau chief Bill Keller called them 'the Replacements':

> 'The problem with the cutbacks in professional foreign coverage is not just the loss of experience and wisdom. It's the rise of — and exploitation of — the Replacements, a legion of freelancers, often untrained and too often unsupported. They gravitate to the bang-bang, because that's what editors and broadcast producers will pay for. And chances are that nobody has their backs' (Keller 2013).

In this section I demonstrate how the pulling-back of news organisations in covering Syria as a response to the extreme threat to journalists on the ground resulted in the adoption by reporters of new ways of working with sources on the ground. First, the evidence that news organisations had avoided taking responsibility for freelances gathering news on their behalf. Many of the freelances I interviewed knew the missing colleagues who were murdered by Islamic State during 2014-2015. All were concerned about the new 'rules' about submitting work to their employers. The photographer and video journalist, Robert King, who had previously worked for AP Television News (APTV) and CNN, said that Channel 4 News wanted him to leave Syria before looking at material he had shot in Aleppo (interview via social media, 10 October 2012). This was later confirmed by a source on the foreign desk at *Channel 4 News* (interview via social media, 16 October 2012). It became apparent that other international freelances also felt their erstwhile employers the news organisations had mainly erected barriers to prevent collaborations with freelances in order to protect those same organisations from assuming responsibility for their safety:

> 'In a phone conversation, Sky told me no before they even knew who I was, and said we need people to have done hostile environment training[55]. I said I had done such a course in 2007 and they said it needs to have been done within last three years. Al Jazeera said no as well –- I can't remember if it was a blanket ban on freelance stuff, but I remember the message being: 'Don't bother approaching us with your stuff' (anonymous international freelance journalist, interview via e-mail, 23 May 2013).

Even experienced international freelances, such as the Austrian reporter Petra Ramsauer, experienced problems with clients with whom they had worked previously. She told me:

> '*Die Zeit Online*, the leading German news site for which I work, sent me a formal mail the other day. They say they are not ready to endorse my trip to Syria. That they are not ready to admit that they knew in advance I would be going. This was strange, since I

[55] This training can be expensive, but charitable organisations such as the Rory Peck Trust (named for my former Frontline News colleague killed in Moscow in 1993) as well as other providers offer discounted or free training from the main providers. It also counts as a tax-deductible business cost for freelances.

have been writing from Syria for them for two years' (interview via social media, 13 September 2013).

At their request I agreed that I would quote some of the freelance respondents anonymously because they were afraid that, should potential employers perceive their comments about commissioning practices as critical, that might stand in the way of them being employed in the future. I have used pseudonyms for all the local parajournalists such as fixers and drivers to whom I talked in Syria after a discussion about how best to ensure their safety in their home communities with the news organisation which retained the services of one of them. In an article for the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Pendry 2013b), published soon after the gas attacks, I cited a number of online posts from editors I had seen on the closed Facebook group for reporters already mentioned above, in which they solicited any freelances in Damascus to report on the gas attacks. The group was ostensibly secret because it contained logistical information which would have been useful to those wishing to do its members harm by tracking their movements online. This is why I do not name the group. It seemed to me reasonable to reprint the posts on this site from staff at the news organisations which had previously stated publicly they would decline freelance work produced in Syria, since they appeared to have changed their mind and were soliciting work when copy was in great demand.

An international freelance was unhappy that news organisations were refusing to take the work of all his international freelance colleagues, even the responsible ones. Another reporter, who requested anonymity for fear of prejudicing future work opportunities, also complained of the 'hypocrisy' of the news organisations in still using freelances (both international and local) who work for the news agencies, examined below.

> 'I think it is a bad habit to ban [international] freelance work altogether, like the *Sunday Times* did (and others). As these newspapers still buy photos from the wire –- which is often delivered anyway by [international] freelances. So such steps seem to me hypocritical and in the end only minimise the money a[n international] freelance can earn. [This is because] via the wire you often get less money than if you sell it directly to a newspaper –- and the newspaper itself pays less money to get wire images' (interview via email, 23 May 2013).

Petra Ramsauer said the traditional rivalry between staff and freelances also plays a part, and a foreign desk (staff) reporter who commissions her work conceded as such:

> 'He did admit that he would use each and every opportunity to "kick [international] freelances" out of an assignment. And pointed out the security risk is such an opportunity. So the safety issue will also be raised and possibly "used" by people like him against hiring freelances' (author interview).

Richard Spencer, then Middle East correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, says executives on his newspaper are as concerned as those from rival news organisations about the consequences if things go wrong: 'From a corporate perspective, the management of the

Telegraph are concerned about the costs of getting people out of kidnap situations,' he says (author interview). This is not to ascribe solely negative motivations on the part of news organisations to their decisions about international freelance use. Undoubtedly, news executives really do want to protect inexperienced, naive and untrained individuals who unwittingly put themselves in harm's way. Yet news providers who take responsibility for international freelances also face large bills. Online news company *Global Post* commissioned American freelance James Foley to report from Syria which resulted in him being kidnapped and beheaded in August 2014. The firm had spent millions of dollars trying – unsuccessfully – to secure his release (Nye 2014). Nor is there much agreement among international freelances about how much support they should demand from their clients, the news organisations. Independent newsgatherers compete intensely with each other, and an exceptional piece might win an award, so freelances do not speak with a single voice when it comes to their terms of employment. The Frontline Club, which represents mostly international freelance newsgatherers working in areas of conflict, asked its members what they thought of the restrictions news organisations place on hiring them. Two-thirds of those who responded[56] said they would forgo the support of news organisations if it was the only way they could sell their work. Freelances with fewer skills and less experience were more likely to agree with the proposition. Such people were less likely to have done hostile environment training or be able to afford the cost of insurance. These are precisely the individuals whom news organisations are likely to be reluctant to employ, yet in the precarious freelance journalism economy such costs are significant for journalists who may not have the cash flow to cover them. The British freelance journalist and photographer Benjamin Hiller acknowledged they should work responsibly with the news organisations:

> 'I think it should be natural that if you work on assignment for a special newspaper or magazine to cover an event inside Syria that both sides respect each other's demands. If a newspaper or magazine hires a[n international] freelance on the ground or wants to buy their stuff I think they should for sure put in some of their resources to advance the security of the freelance, like giving him the same protection level like [sic.] staff members. That means including him in their security assessments ... probably providing him with a satellite device (often too expensive for a single freelance), keeping in regular contact with him and try to help him out if there are problems -– and working on a risk plan in the case he gets abducted. On the same issue it should be natural for the [international] freelance to listen to the newspaper or magazine and agree to the terms they have, like the security approach, etc. It is mutual giving and taking' (interview via email, 29 May 2013).

International freelance journalists say that restrictions on hiring them are designed to protect the news organisation from having to take responsibility for freelances if they get into trouble, rather than any other reason. According to another international freelance who requested their name be withheld to avoid being seen as awkward by future employers, the way it works is as follows:

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[56] This report is no longer available online.

'If you ask someone before they go in you can influence their safety and planning arrangements, but you can potentially be considered liable for their safety. An international freelance journalist to whom I granted anonymity pointed out that if someone is already 'inside' (as the journalists called being in Syria) it is:

- convenient;
- they have not yet come to harm;
- you have no control of or influence over their safety;
- you are not liable for them as they went of their own volition;
- it's cheaper as you can commission a piece without discussing covering costs as, well, they are there anyway' (author interview, 2 September 2013).

Most of the international freelances voiced cynicism about the motives behind any ban by the news organisations on accepting their work. They surmised that the motive for the news organisations to — as one put it — 'come up with increasingly bigger hurdles' (author interview) was for their erstwhile employers to avoid their responsibility for looking after freelances.

After speaking to all parties (*Press Gazette*, the newspaper and British freelance Rick Findler), it is still unclear whether the *Sunday Times* really did stop working with international freelances. Sean Ryan, then Associate Editor of the *Sunday Times* and Marie Colvin's former editor, told the author that the ban was 'all a bit of a misunderstanding' (author interview). Ryan told me that, in fact, the newspaper had been open for business all along with 'responsible freelances'. However, he conceded that no work from international freelances in Syria had in fact been published since the *Press Gazette* piece. He also said that the colleague who made the statement to *Press Gazette* was misquoted. I put this to Dominic Ponsford, the editor of *Press Gazette*, who said the quote came in an email from the paper (author interview). The contradictory statements made by different news executives at the *Sunday Times* may point to concerns over duty of care. But it was difficult to get a clear answer. When asked at a Frontline Club event what the *Sunday Times* lawyers had told him about how far their legal responsibility for duty of care extended to international freelances, Ryan said he personally had never been given any such advice and declined to elaborate what the other executives at the paper might have been told. [57]

Other news organisations did send staff journalists and freelances to work in Syria. The Channel 4 film maker Olly Lambert who reported from both frontlines for the film *Across the Lines*, which was broadcast in April 2013, likewise first worked with rebel forces, flew back to London and then returned to film on the government side with official accreditation. One of my interviewees, Richard Spencer, who at the time was Daily Telegraph Middle East correspondent, was keen to point out that he and others, including freelances contracted to the paper, continued to travel to parts of Syria throughout this period. The safest way to do this was to obtain official accreditation with the Syrian government. Spencer pointed out that any such ban by the *Sunday Times*, its sister paper *The Times* and the rest was unlikely

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[57] The Frontline club event where I questioned Ryan is available online at: https://www.frontlineclub.com/the-changing-state-of-reporting-on-syria/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

to ever have been absolute. pointed out that *The Times* had sent the most famous war photographer of all to Syria during the period of the supposed ban (Loyd 2013).

> ‘As they themselves say, it's obviously not really true -- they'll send Don McCullin (as they did) and likewise if they get a killer pic whose provenance can be quickly identified they'll use it -- what it really means is that the likely need for an offered story or pic and the quality of the person offering is not worth the time and effort that will be required to discuss all the issues involved and take a view on the product. But perhaps, try again when we really need you' (author interview).

In fact, says Spencer, he is not sure the policy on hiring international freelances is so different in Syria now:

> ‘Actually, British broadsheets would have that policy re. war zones all the time — we "generally" only send staffers and retained stringers who have been through our HET [hostile environment training] programmes[58] and are on our insurance [. . .] though we will make exceptions in special circumstances. I'm not sure for most of us that has changed in any way' (author interview).

A loose or non-existent ‘ban' on international freelances is a useful way of filtering out non-staff journalists that a news organisation is unsure about working with — for a range of reasons including but not limited to safety, according to Spencer:

> ‘Desk editors have a stockpile of useful phrases for fobbing off freelances while trying not to discourage them and this is a quite useful one for this situation. (See also, ‘sounds really interesting but we've just got no space what with Syria/royal baby/Miley Cyrus, etc.) Saying, "we generally don't accept freelance copy" to the photographer is what any editor's going to do on any subject, meaning, if you're going to take up my time, make it bloody good' (author interview).

Findler told me that he accepted there may have been a security reason not to accept work from international freelances while they are in Syria. There had been suspicions that *Sunday Times* reporter Marie Colvin died because her live broadcasts made her easy to locate. Findler said:

> ‘I think Marie may have been killed by targeting her electronic transmissions when she was filing.[59] So if the pictures will wait and the publication I am working for insists I

[58] Hostile environment training is usually delivered to journalists and other individuals who plan to work in high risk locations by means of short residential courses. Subjects typically cover battlefield first aid, how to avoid and survive a kidnap, and information security.

[59] This was borne out by the finding of a US court in January 2019 in a judgement on a case which had been brought by Colvin's sister against the Syrian government, alleging she was targeted: https://cja.org/assad-regime-found-liable-for-death-of-war-reporter-marie-colvin/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

leave before I file and I think there *may* be a risk, I will file when I am out of Syria […] I don't have a problem with that' (author interview).

An interview I conducted with the British freelance reporter, Hannah Lucinda Smith, was further evidence for the ambivalence of news organisations towards working with international freelances in Syria. Smith scripted and performed a voice piece for the Radio 4 programme *From Our Own Correspondent*, about snipers in Aleppo (Smith 2013a) after she had left the country. Smith had been commissioned by an executive in BBC radio at a time when BBC staff reporters had been ordered out of the area. However, a BBC news executive who spoke to me under condition of anonymity said that there was a ban within the Corporation on using international freelances: 'The principle is that we don't want to create a market which encourages people to take risks. It's not fair to encourage people to do that' (telephone interview, 27 June 2013). It then became apparent that the anonymous BBC news executive had had a row with the BBC Radio editor who had commissioned the freelance, because he believed all departments at the BBC should have the same policy. I was referred to the BBC press office: 'We use our own staff on deployments,' they told me by email (4 September 2013). This left open the question of who was doing the reporting, since by August 2013 nearly all international staff and freelances were understandably absent from Syria, unless on a government-sponsored visit.

The outsourcing of news gathering to locally-hired Syrian staff contracted to work for the news agencies caused something like a moral panic in the news industry at the end of 2013. It is surely asking a lot of Syrians to expect them to be impartial when reporting their own civil war. However, what is remarkable and significant about the reporting of the Syrian conflict at this time was that locally-hired newsgatherers replaced a large part of the international press corps. It was international news agencies ('the wires') which largely enabled this change. After foreign reporters largely had stopped going to Syria in the summer of 2013, news organisations began to rely on the wire services to fill the gap. News organisations pay a flat fee to use as much material from the wires as they want and contractual arrangements for news agencies' staff are handled by themselves. The result was that the agencies' clients, the news organisations, are not responsible for the safety of the people who provide pictures, words and video that fill the foreign pages of newspapers and their news websites. This bears comparison with the information subsidies provided by volunteer investigators online such as Eliot Higgins (Sienkiewicz 2015). In a journal article about the way news organisations handle user-generated content from Syria, Murrell points out that this is by far the safest option for news executives who are concerned about duty of care:

> '[T]his war is being covered second and third hand by activists [. . .] Footage [. . .] is used by broadcasters more as 'wallpaper' to cover general bombing references rather than as a valuable picture that can help explain what is happening in Syria. [. . .] broadcasters care less about certainty of provenance when using agency material. When news agencies, as prime drivers of the world's media agenda, use the words 'purportedly' and 'said to be' about material that they are carrying, then it should be worrying for all of us as viewers of these images further down the chain' (2018: 16).

Murrell writes that exactly the same thing had happened during previous insurgency in Iraq. In other words, the news agencies, increasingly staffed by locally-hired journalists, have become a kind of reporting backstop when no-one else will do the job: ‘When a news editor doesn’t feel able to send their own staff person, there will usually be something available on the wires’ (Murrell 2010: 126). But at least in Iraq the news organisations had international staff in bureaux in Baghdad to supervise the locally-hired newsgatherers. And there were also Coalition troops to guarantee the safety of the bureau staff. In Syria, independent journalists operated in unfriendly terrain and only the smallest of the international news agencies, Agence France Presse (AFP), maintained a small bureau in Damascus throughout the conflict. The global news agencies (the ‘wires’) thus became a principal mechanism by which news organisations effected the outsourcing of news gathering on the ground to non-staff correspondents, including locally-hired newsgatherers who were criticised for being partisan. This is clearly illustrated by the death of 18-year-old Reuters photographer Molhem Barakat, in Aleppo, in December 2013. It highlighted the difficulties facing news agencies relying on local hires to gather news and Reuters faced accusations that the ethical practice of its news gathering had been undermined by the constraints of operating as a news gatherer of last resort. Initially, the focus was on Barakat’s youth; his age was variously reported as 17, 18 or 19. BBC News producer Stuart Hughes investigated Barakat’s conditions of employment. He told me:

> ‘We’re entering uncharted territory in terms of the “reportability” of Syria and I fear this is the inevitable result. There’s no way Reuters would have put a staffer into Aleppo – but they’re prepared to give a teenager camera kit and send him on his way (author interview).

During my fieldwork it became apparent that Barakat was no neutral bystander, which had implications for his ability to be impartial. Like many other locals working for international news organisations in Syria, Barakat was deeply involved in the conflict. He was killed alongside his brother Mustafa, a fighter for the ‘moderate’ rebel Tawhid militia. According to a *New York Times* investigation (Estrin and Shoumali 2014), Barakat would accompany his brother to battles, taking pictures of his brother and his comrades-in-arms. Sometimes Barakat carried a gun. The journalist Hannah Lucinda Smith, already mentioned, who befriended Barakat, says the latter had considered becoming a suicide bomber for al Qa’eda:

> 'In the end he didn’t join al Qa’eda; he started working as a photographer, hoping to emulate some of the journalists he was hanging around with. He often asked me if he could work with me and I refused, because I didn’t want the responsibility of an eager seventeen-year-old with no war-zone training and little experience on my shoulders. Soon afterwards I saw that he was filing photos for Reuters. I hope that they took responsibility for him in a way that I couldn’t, and I hope that if he was taking photographs as he died in the hope of selling them to that agency, they also take responsibility for him now’ (Smith 2013b).

Reuters, the news agency that hires the most Syrian photographers in Syria, paid Barakat a day rate of $150 to file for them, providing his cameras, a flak jacket and helmet. Four other Syrian photographers who worked for Reuters said they were not given the medical, safety or ethics training which would be provided for staff photographers and international freelances who regularly worked for the agency. It was claimed that Barakat and other Syrian newsgatherers were largely left to work by themselves. There were no foreign photographers in town on the day Barakat was killed (Estrin and Shoumali 2014). BBC News producer Stuart Hughes asked Reuters whether they had checked Barakat's age, and what was Reuters' policy on purchasing freelance material — in this case from locally-hired newsgatherers — in Syria. The head of PR at Reuters told him:

> 'We are deeply saddened by the death of Molhem Barakat, who sold photos to Reuters on a freelance basis. To best protect the many journalists on the ground in a dangerous and volatile war zone, we think it is inappropriate to comment any further at this time' (Hughes 2013).

Hughes was concerned that the death of Barakat indicated a wider problem. He says locally-hired newsgatherers working in other areas of conflict are normally supervised far more closely than they currently are in Syria:

> 'When Reuters put out statements like the one they gave me I do despair. Big news organisations (mine included) are looking to social media and citizen journalism, etc., as a way of telling stories in a different way, increasing access to places like Syria, etc., but when they feel threatened they think they can pull the shutters down and say nothing. Hopefully this case will help show that's not an option anymore -– they've got to be more transparent' (Hughes, author interview).

A *New York Times* investigation also claimed that Syrian photographers had provided Reuters with staged photographs that were in some cases improperly credited (Estrin and Shoumali 2014). Finally, a separate investigation suggested another example where a Reuters stringer had faked pictures, such as those of a ten-year-old boy supposedly working in a munitions factory (Winslow 2014). In all these cases, Reuters denied their photographers had been working unethically. There is also a large number of other Syrians who gather news, including 'activists' and other sources. This raises questions about whether news gathered in this war accords with the core journalistic norms of objectivity and impartiality (Rodgers 2012: 47). The principal finding of this section is, therefore, that locally-hired journalists — often hurriedly recruited and in some cases barely trained — upon whom news organisations increasingly relied to gather news in Syria after the Ghouta attacks, were in some cases provably partisan.

7.2.1. Emergence of Eliot Higgins as a news source

In this section I describe how Eliot Higgins, then a little-known British blogger calling himself 'Brown Moses,' emerged as a key source intermediary for reporters, by means of his collaboration with the *New York Times* reporter Chris Chivers. This is an important element in my thesis. During my fieldwork research period I could see that nearly all the principal journalists who worked on Syria-related news followed the Brown Moses blog. Higgins had caught the attention of professional journalists by monitoring social media channels including YouTube and Twitter, posting that he had observed a huge increase in the use by Syrian rebel fighters of Soviet-era weapons. It appeared to Higgins that the weapons had originated in Croatia and he sent Chivers the evidence he had gathered online. Chivers realised that he and Higgins were working on different parts of the same story, though Higgins was weeks ahead of him, and told his editors. The *New York Times* used evidence Higgins had gathered from numerous video clips to conduct a bigger investigation tracing how the weapons were moved from Croatia to Jordan and into Syria. Higgins's big break in foreign news journalism came about when he was allowed to post the workings of his verification of the weapons on the *New York Times* 'At War' blog (Higgins 2013). The same day, Chivers wrote in the main paper:

> 'Many of the weapons — which include a particular type of Yugoslav-made recoilless gun, as well as assault rifles, grenade launchers, machine guns, mortars and shoulder-fired rockets for use against tanks and other armored vehicles — have been extensively documented by one blogger, Eliot Higgins, who writes under the name Brown Moses and has mapped the new weapons' spread through the conflict' (Chivers and Schmitt 2013).

The story proved that the US secret services at least knew the weapons were being shipped in and were possibly involved in their shipping. The collaboration utilised two very different skillsets: an investigation including the use of Chivers' sources in Washington, and the verification of news material using what has been called the 'hive mind' of Twitter (Zappavigna 2011: 789). Chivers wrote:

> 'For weeks we had been watching the spread through the civil war in Syria of weapons made in the former Yugoslavia, and been admiring the work of Eliot Higgins, (a.k.a. Brown Moses[60]) as he tried mapping their appearances in the videos of varied and far-flung armed groups' (Chivers 2013).

Dhiraj Murthy worries that exclusive material produced by citizen journalists may generally "merely represent a new means for traditional media to pick up a scoop" (2011: 784). However, Chivers credited Higgins' important work, writing: 'Thank you, Eliot, for your patience, and your fine eye, and for creating an opportunity for merging new and old forms of reporting into a fresh look at recent events in what is becoming a more active regional war' (Chivers 2013). Higgins had started out as an amateur commentator who became interested in the weapons being used in the Arab Spring uprising in Libya, in 2011. He would post frequent comments underneath stories carried on news websites, like that of the *Guardian*. Gradually Higgins acquired research skills, verifying the provenance of posts that others had made online and began blogging from his Facebook page. He taught himself to

[60] This was Higgins's original blog page, which has since been archived. He named his blog after a Frank Zappa song he liked. See Brown Moses blog and archive: https://brown-moses.blogspot.com/[Online. Accessed 27 August 2020]. The page has links to the Facebook and other social media pages where Higgins first began publishing his investigations.

use free, widely available online tools such as Google maps to identify where videos were filmed, even though they may have been renamed and were pretending to be something else. Scholars in the social sciences now use digital tools such as Geographic Information Science, or GIS (Chainey and Ratcliffe 2005) and these techniques help make the empirical basis of research data visible and checkable. During the emergence of social networks on digital media, Rosen had hoped that non-journalists would teach themselves to use such tools to find nuggets of truth hiding online in plain sight. In this way, citizen journalists would emerge, empowered, from the masses 'formerly known as the audience' (Rosen 2006). When I met him, Higgins was a pioneer, a rare example of those imaginary citizen journalists had succeeded in contributing to foreign news journalism. In the beginning Higgins's work was mainly conducted by crowd-sourcing information on Twitter and other social media sites. Higgins spoke of the difficulty of establishing himself as a trusted news source as an unknown person: 'When you have no credibility, it is very important to build a reputation' (author interview). He continued:

> 'The problem is, NGOs, journalists and government departments don't know how to deal with this material. When I started the blog, I didn't think of myself as a non-traditional reporter or journalist. I was doing something I was interested in doing. As time went on I was trying to get the information I was writing out there. So I was starting to accept offers to write articles. Unpaid, I should add. And that stated getting the information out there. Then I started thinking about what techniques I can demonstrate to other people. So in a way I was trying to educate other people how to do it as well. I was trying to work with this vast amount of information and turn it into something useful. The one thing I came up against a lot was, people were producing this information, but no one was taking any notice of it. Because they were making it too hard to be accessible for journalists. So I started to think, how can I make this easy? I assumed journalists were too busy or too lazy to do the work themselves to investigate it or fact check stuff. I was trying to create stuff that was neatly packaged with a nice little bow, with all the sources and information. I think that helped me break out of what is quite often an insular little community discussing these things. I basically did all the work I could on the subject and just gave it to people for free' (Higgins, author interview).

7.2.2. The Sarin gas attacks in Ghouta (August 2013)

Further evidence of the importance of understanding how staff reporters and editors were actually working with independent journalists, as opposed to how they say they did, came from the reporting of the Sarin poison gas attack on the people of the Damascus suburb of Ghouta on 21 August 2013. This section first examines the effect of the continuing absence of reporters on the ground. It is followed by an examination of Higgins' contribution to the reporting about who was responsible.

The gas attack mattered because it became a test of whether the United States and its allies should intervene in the Syrian conflict. If it could be proven that chemical weapons had been used, that would appear to cross what US President Obama had said was a 'red line,' crossing which would trigger intervention. Very few international journalists -– either staff or freelance -– were in the area at the time of the attack so it was difficult to find out who was responsible. Once again, news organisations wanted to use international freelances in the most dangerous areas of conflict even though some had said they would not. In the hours after the August 2013 Sarin gas attack, posts by other members of the journalists' Facebook group who were staff reporters and commissioning editors appeared that tried to locate and solicit any international freelances in Damascus to report the attack. Within hours of the attacks, one British newspaper which had previously said it was not going to commission international freelances, but was now desperate for copy and pictures, ended up soliciting them on the closed Facebook group mentioned above. Phoebe Greenwood, Assistant Foreign Editor of the *Guardian*, was one of several editors who went looking for international freelances on the group. Others news organisations included the *Mail on Sunday*, *Channel 4 News* and the *Daily Telegraph*. Of those outlets, only the *Guardian* had previously stated they would not use international freelances working in Syria (Turvill 2013). On 22 August 2013, the day after the gas attacks, Greenwood said that her newspaper was looking for 'any freelances currently working in Damascus'. When I phoned Greenwood to ask if it was now *Guardian* policy to use freelances in Syria, she said that she was only looking for 'corroboration' for the gas story, not actually to hire a journalist to produce a story (author interview). Quite how she was hoping to convince a fellow professional journalist to report for her without the individual insisting on either a byline or payment was unclear. The initial evidence that a chemical attack had occurred were 70-odd videos posted on YouTube by residents of East Ghouta, where mysterious projectiles had landed. The video footage of children, gasping for breath and dying on screen, had a huge impact when it was transmitted by television news channels and news websites around the world. In the absence of independent reporters on the ground, the most credible evidence of who was to blame for the attack came from analysis conducted by Eliot Higgins that was again published both on his blog and later picked up by the *Guardian.* In it, Higgins and an open-source collaborator, the author and security consultant Dan Kaszeta, who had previously worked for the US Army, the White House Military Office and the US Secret Service stated the rockets were of a design unique to the Syrian Army and videos posted by the latter proved had been used by it against opposition forces since 2012 (Higgins and Kaszeta 2014). Most damning of all for the Syrian government, Higgins published screen grabs of publicity material published by the Syrian army units showing them using the unique 'Volcano' type rockets.[61] Higgins contributed his findings to a report by the rights group Human Rights Watch which was published within weeks of the attack, and which blamed the Syrian military, based on the evidence (Human Rights Watch 2013). The UN published its report (Sellstrom, Barbeschi and Cairns 2013), which had been prepared for the by specialists from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), shortly afterwards. It stated Sarin gas had been used. Responsibility for determining who had launched the munitions had been excluded from the UN mandate, but the UN inspectors found the trajectories of the rockets led back to a Syrian army base. The United Nations report therefore confirmed Higgins's findings were correct.

[61] The evidence is available to view on the Bellingcat web page: https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/case-studies/2014/07/15/volcanoes-in-damascus/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

7.3. Syria fieldwork Discussion

The fieldwork has described the collaborative sourcing practices by which staff reporters, who were increasingly absent from Syria, subcontracted elements of reporting to Higgins, who as described does not consider himself a journalist and whom in this thesis I am terming a novel kind of parajournalist; international freelances, including freelances employed by the international news agencies; and non-journalist locals. The staff reporters whose work is examined here, including the *New York Times* reporter Chris Chivers and Richard Spencer, then of the *Daily Telegraph*, did visit to Syria during this period. However, many others stayed away. Higgins's novel contribution was to verify and publish material posted on social media by sources from all sides on the ground, particularly the following:

- Military personnel on the ground who published video and other material showing weapons they were using
- The Volcano rockets used in the gas attacks, which had been filmed by the Syrian army
- Ex-Soviet weapons sent by the US to rebel forces, tracked independently by Chivers
- Footage of the remains of the Volcano munitions, posted by civilians in Ghouta

I have presented the fieldwork as a rich ethnographic description of the reporting of the war in Syria as that of what Wall and Zahed call a contemporary 'pop-up news ecology' (2015: 723). I have examined the contribution of newsgatherers and sources on the ground, and actors in the digital sphere, newly incorporated into the journalistic tribe of war reporters. I have also explored the institutional outsourcing of news gathering by the international news organisations of the Syrian conflict, who progressively withdrew their staff reporters and then refused to publish the work of international freelances who remained. By becoming part of Chivers's source network, Higgins first established his credibility in the world of news by verifying the distinctive ex-Soviet weapons used by the anti-government rebels. In a profile of Higgins for the *New Yorker*, BBC news producer Stuart Hughes says: 'He's probably broken more stories than most journalists do in a career' (cited in Keefe 2013). The emergence of Higgins may appear to confirm the views of those within and outside the academy who view bloggers in celebratory terms for the ways in which they supposedly democratise the public sphere (Antony and Thomas 2010, Shirky 2008). However, for the purpose of the thesis I have identified it as a further example of the outsourcing of news gathering from staff reporters to a diverse range of other individuals. This time it successively incorporated international freelances; local freelances; and the amateur weapons blogger Higgins. I have identified the global news agencies (the 'wires') as a principal mechanism by which news organisations effected the outsourcing of news gathering on the ground to non-staff correspondents, including locally-hired newsgatherers. The fact that local actors recruited to gather news in Syria might have been partisan was difficult to verify transparently using 'traditional' means.

When I first met Higgins, he said his work was not designed to replace that of traditional journalists. Rather, it complements the work of reporters on the ground. Higgins told me: 'Journalists are overworked. That's why they like stories to be handed to them on a plate.

When I show reporters how I work, they look at me as though I have just shown them how to do an amazing card trick' (author interview). Higgins told me he was monitoring 700 YouTube channels run by activists, citizen journalists and groups of rebel fighters in Syria, as well as government television channels and those of militia groups connected to the regime (author interview). Evidence gathered by Higgins's methods can be easily checked by anyone. This offers significant transparency about the chain of evidence when authenticating news reports (Higgins 2018). Ristovska identifies the key role in such cases of video shot by local people. She writes: 'Interpreting images is becoming an essential skill within the struggles to unveil human rights offenses, to report on global crises, and to successfully present legal evidence' (2016: 355). Funding himself mainly with money donated by the public, Higgins investigated how to build metadata into videos and other material from Syria in order to make the data searchable and was hoping to turn the material into a resource for journalists and, eventually, war crimes prosecutors. At the time, between 100 and 300 new videos were appearing every day, though he told me: 'Only 0.1 per cent is of interest' (author interview). Higgins said that instead of talking to activists, he prefers to work with material posted online that anyone can check. Going beyond material posted online by involving himself directly with witnesses on the ground poses unexpected problems he was not equipped to resolve. For example, on one occasion Higgins was sitting in his home in Leicester on a Skype call with an activist, discussing the Sarin bomb that had landed nearby, when the local man told him he was, in fact, keeping it in his flat. Higgins found himself telling them to at least put the chemical weapon on the balcony (author interview). Within the academy, it is recognised that use of these technologies reinforces transparency and promotes research which can be independently and transparently verified. Writing about the digital humanities, Burdick et al. point out:

> '[W]hile the humanities do not shun empirical methods, they have rarely been characterised by the strictest forms of empiricism [. . .] Digital capabilities have challenged the humanist to make explicit many of the premises on which those understandings are based in order to make them operative in computational environments' (2012: 4).

The initial review of the literature in the current thesis provides abundant evidence that hard verifiable empirical proof, verifiable by third parties, is also what has been missing from the sourcing of foreign news in areas of conflict. In other words, 'social media shot down wartime propaganda' (Pendry 2018). In an article entitled 'Open source and journalism,' Lewis and Usher call for journalism to be reimagined as 'knowledge management' (2013: 612), in a similar way to the method by which open-source computer code is iteratively produced by the free collaboration of like-minded individuals. News, they suggest, should be a 'shared, unfinished and imperfect process' (Lewis and Usher 2013: 613). These are comparatively new ways of working -- as in news journalism so, as already noted, in the digital humanities.

In a pivotal journal article about citizen journalists like Higgins entitled 'Start making sense: A three-tier approach to citizen journalism', Sienkiewicz argues that it is simplistic to think they have usurped the role of professional reporters to verify and publish important news material originating online. Instead, Higgins and others like him represent what he terms an 'interpreter tier' (Sienkiewicz 2014: 691) of individuals who are neither professional journalists nor producers of user-generated content (UGC). Rather, they analyse and interpret the flood of such material from contemporary conflicts, which Matheson and Allan note 'vastly broadens' (2009: 102) the opportunities for both news media and the news audience to hold the powerful to account. Again, this is similar to the immensely broad scope of possible research in the digital sphere which has opened up in e.g. the digital humanities. Sienkiewicz writes:

> '[I]t is important for scholars and popular critics to acknowledge the role of a central, interpreter tier in the transmission of complex fields of citizen journalism. Although this reconceptualisation damages idealistic notions of true open access to news dissemination, it is crucial to understand for reasons beyond even its conceptual value to media scholars' (2014: 699).

Another finding which came out of this fieldwork is how potent the myth of the war reporter remains. Lyse Doucet, the BBC's chief international correspondent, wrote that after Colvin was killed the prodigious body of work about her (Conroy 2014, Hilsum 2018, Martin 2018), including a feature film starring Rosamund Pike (Heineman 2018), tended to turn Colvin into 'the stuff of legend, catapulted into a category not of her own making' (Doucet 2019: 16). Colvin's biographer, the Channel 4 reporter Lindsey Hilsum, writes that Colvin was heavily marketed by her employers as the epitome of the heroic, solo operator. Colleagues told her they believed that Colvin was exploited by the *Sunday Times* after she lost her eye in Sri Lanka in 2001. As they put it, this was 'for the sake of competition — her photo byline, complete with eyepatch, had become not just her trademark but the paper's, as if risk-taking were evidence of good reporting' (Hilsum 2018: 251).

The final point to consider in analysing the gas attacks is the contrast with the overwhelmingly poor reception given by those in the news industry and weapons experts alike (see e.g. Bloomfield 2018) to the sourcing of controversial reports by the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh, who contradicted Higgins's claims that the Syrian government was responsible for the gas attacks (Hersh 2013, 2014). Based on interviews with anonymous military and intelligence officials, Hersh claimed the al-Nusra rebel group was responsible and that the Obama administration had covered this up in order to blame the Syrian government and use the attack as a pretext for military intervention. The former *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger wrote that Hersh's sourcing had been fatally undermined because it was not transparent. 'It was painful for some to see Hersh's 2014 and 2017 reporting of chemical attacks in Damascus forensically interrogated by the British blogger Eliot Higgins' (Rusbridger 2018: 14). Hersh first gained recognition in the 1960s for exposing the My Lai massacre and its cover-up during the Vietnam War. Hersh has spent his career uncovering wrong-doing at the highest level, though his reporting has also long been criticised for its reliance on uncheckable leaks from official sources (Anson 1997, Thompson 2001, Sherman 2003). What was missing from Hersh's account of the gas attack was hard empirical proof and the anonymity of his principal sources made transparency impossible. By contrast, with Higgins the wisdom of the crowd used a far more transparent process whose verification news consumers could assess for themselves. This is another example of the continuities in the culture of journalistic sourcing practices, since doubts about the reliability and check-ability of Hersh's sources had dogged him for decades.

7.4. Chapter Summary: Syria Fieldwork

The fieldwork in this chapter explores journalists' responses, and those of their employers the news organisations, to the unprecedented targeting of reporters in Syria for kidnap and murder, which began in 2013. Chivers was greatly aided in his reporting at the *New York Times* by the work of blogger Eliot Higgins, who emerged as a significant new player in the news ecosystem. The value of Higgins's work for professional journalists lay in his innovative new online verification mechanisms, depending on close cooperation with local sources on the ground. It is not that Higgins was using completely different sources from previous war reporters in the study chapters. But the range of potential sources he used to verify facts was vastly increased and there was far more transparency simply because the facts were easily checkable by anyone with an internet connection. Even more so because Higgins was also not, in the first instance, publishing investigations in professional, commercial news media – they are available online for free and anyone can have the same access to it as any journalist. Higgins has been theorised as representing a new wave of online 'interpreters' of disputed material posted by eye-witnesses (Sienkiewicz 2014). During the summer of 2014 Higgins crowd-funded a website called Bellingcat to form a collective of volunteers who could train people in the online verification techniques he had popularised. The work of the Bellingcat collective is examined further in the following fieldwork study chapter, an example of collaborative news gathering, incorporating professional reporters and news sources, in Ukraine.

8. Ukraine Fieldwork (2015)

The previous chapter examined the response by news industry's response to unprecedented attacks on journalists in Syria, to rely increasingly on junior or other loosely-affiliated members of the war reporting tribe in order to source news from Syria including international and locally-hired freelances and novel online 'interpreters'. The findings clearly merited further investigation. But in Syria there was no chance of meeting any of the sources and for this chapter I travelled to Ukraine to interview conflict journalists' sources from social media, who tweeted from the battlefield. This is the final fieldwork study chapter which addresses research question 2 about foreign correspondents' sourcing practices of 'the present'. Again, just as much as sourcing theory, the human factor informs our understanding the role played by technology and the changing culture of reporting.

8.1. Ukraine fieldwork Method

For this final fieldwork chapter, I examine another aspect of how contemporary sourcing occurs in a digital news ecosystem, the part played by local people and Bellingcat in verifying information for professional reporters. Bellingcat was an important intermediary by which journalists verified disputed events in eastern Ukraine after the Russian invasion of 2014, amidst an unprecedented state-sponsored campaign of disinformation and deception. For the purposes of the overall like-for-like comparison of staff reporters' sourcing techniques I interviewed the journalist Simon Ostrovsky about the sourcing of his *Vice News* documentary film 'Selfie Soldiers' (Ostrovsky 2015).[62]

This section explains how I conducted the different elements of the fieldwork in this chapter providing a picture of some of the informal source networks used by journalists and parajournalists to collaboratively source and verify news from eastern Ukraine, including how they identified Russian troops serving in theatre, and identifying who was responsible for shooting down the Malaysian Airlines passenger aircraft MH17 on 17 July 2014 over eastern Ukraine near the town of Torez, killing all 298 people on board. To do so, I travelled to Ukraine in September 2015 to meet a diverse group of individuals whose posts on social media had become sources for Bellingcat stories. As in the previous fieldwork, how I conducted the research was shaped by similar editorial, logistical and ethical challenges to those facing journalists covering the conflict. However, the current study gives me the space to discuss these factors, which is rarely possible in news journalism.

Deciding where to conduct interviews had implications for the security of myself and the research participants. I had originally intended to base myself in the town of Kramatorsk in Russian occupied territory. The town is a hub for journalists and independent observers who are working in the occupied territories. To this end I obtained specialist insurance and completed a risk assessment for the University of Kent. It became obvious, however, that I

[62] Ostrovsky now works for the US radio station PBS.

was unlikely to be able to conduct interviews openly in such a place due to the sensitivity of the content of the interviews, essentially designed to explore how what could be termed 'crowd-sourced military intelligence' is sourced and verified. This worry was later confirmed by the interviews I did with some of the research participants then living in Kiev, refugees who had fled eastern Ukraine. They had friends and family who had remained in the occupied area and felt their relatives and others were vulnerable should my interviewees identities become known. Two of them had important information about the circumstances of the arrival of the Buk missile launcher and the firing of the missile.

In total, 17 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in Kiev, a setting which cannot be described as neutral, but was one where interviewees would at least be free to speak. Simon Ostrovsky was one of the Kiev interviewees. As I discuss in the findings below, people in the occupied territories do not speak freely to journalists because they fear for their safety. Few of those who contributed interviews to this fieldwork had previously been interviewed on this subject. Lengthy semi-structured interviews produced qualitative research that was rich in data. All were time coded, translated and transcribed. Most of the interviews were conducted in Russian, the *lingua franca* of the countries comprising the former Soviet Union. At my request, some of the interviews conducted in Ukrainian were translated word-for-word by professional translators into both Russian and English because I read Russian well enough to check more closely an interviewee's syntactic and idiomatic nuances than if it had only been transcribed into English.[63] I triangulated the data from these interviews by conducting follow-up interviews by phone, email and in person with frontline reporters, senior personnel from the main Ukrainian military intelligence organisations, and non-governmental organisations who had been on the ground throughout the conflict. I also travelled to Rotterdam, Holland in September 2016 at the request of police detectives working for the Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to discuss aspects of my research which the police officers had seen online in a presentation at the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (Meccsa) academic conference in Canterbury Christ Church University in January that year. One limitation of my research is that it had to be conducted on the Ukrainian side only, so my interviewees came only from the Ukrainian side. Another is that patriotic Ukrainian interviewees who see themselves as protagonists in an information war have every incentive to aggrandise their true role. Finally, in this field, much information is hard to check. That is why this study focuses primarily on Bellingcat stories that crossed over to mainstream media outlets. Many of these draw on information that has been verified, first in public by Bellingcat and latterly by the international police investigation, first by the JIT report in September 2016 (JIT 2016). One of the helpful aspects of the MH17 case is that, unusually for research into sourcing on social media, much of the material I am presenting in this chapter has been verified according to an extremely high standard of proof by the JIT detectives and has been presented to the district court in the Hague, Holland[64] in order to attribute responsibility for the crime. In June 2019, three Russian nationals and one Ukrainian national, working either for Russian state

[63] Sample transcripts are in an appendix.

[64] This CBS news story references Bellingcat's involvement in verifying evidence used in the trial: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mh17-crash-murder-charges-russian-ukrainian-nationals-malaysia-airlines-flight-17/.

agencies or their proxies in eastern Ukraine, were charged by the chief Dutch Prosecutor Fred Westerbeke in connection with MH17. Their trial opened in Holland in March 2020 (Rankin 2020). Bellingcat has also named a number of other individuals which it claims are also involved, including members of the Russian GRU military intelligence agency, and more personnel from the informal pro-Russian separatist militias operating in eastern Ukraine.

Throughout the fieldwork I was in touch with Bellingcat investigators, principally Aric Toler, who is a Russian speaker and who took the lead in their investigations in Ukraine (Toler 2018). When in Kiev, I also interviewed a Bellingcat translator and researcher who is a Russian citizen and native speaker, based in Kiev, who was at the time using the name '@ReggaeMortis' online[65]. He described himself as an anti-Putin activist and asked me for anonymity, as he was afraid of repercussions from Russian government agencies for his work with Bellingcat. I agreed not to use his name, which I checked against his passport.

In order to find interviewees on the ground inevitably there was a need to find an impartial researcher who possessed good local knowledge and who could win the trust of the interviewees to discuss sensitive aspects of ongoing investigations. In this case I initially approached an award-winning Moscow-based researcher with whom I had previously worked on a television documentary. However, this individual pointed out that for some of the interviewees who were Ukrainian citizens, her Russian ethnicity would likely prove a barrier against speaking freely in an interview.[66] I therefore employed a researcher/fixer named Mari Bastashevski who, though an ethnic Russian and native of St Petersburg, had been living in Kiev since the Maidan protests in 2013-2014.[67] Bastashevski had worked for international journalists at that time, and several vouched for her honesty and impartiality. She also had a proven track record in conducting specialist research for NGOs.[68] After working on my study she went on to a fellowship of the Maurice R. Greenberg World Fellows Program at Yale University. Of necessity I worked closely with the Bellingcat researchers to produce this fieldwork. Just as journalists sometimes get too close to their sources, the same risk exists for scholarly researchers. There is a theoretical conflict of interest between my role as an independent researcher and that of collaborator with my research subjects. I contributed an expert assessment to a Bellingcat report, *MH17: The Open Source Investigation Two Years Later*, for the two-year anniversary of the shooting down of the airliner in July 2016. The report can be found on the Bellingcat website

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[65] He now calls himself "@Mortis_Banned".

[66] It is worth pointing out the exceptional difficulty of conducting journalistic or any other investigations into sensitive topics on the Russian side. News management in the Putin era is brutal, dozens of mostly local journalists having been killed, apparently for reasons connected to their work, since he took power in 2001. At the time of writing Russia was ranked 149 out of 180 countries worldwide in 2019 in the Reporters without Borders' Press Freedom Index: https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2019 [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[67] These were popular protests, centred on the Maidan area of central Kiev, sparked by the Ukrainian government's decision in November 2013 to suspend an agreement paving the way for closer ties to the European Union, in favour of links to Russia.

[68] Including the Small Arms Survey, based at the Graduate Institute of International Development Studies in Geneva.

(Bellingcat 2016a). Since my academic status was clearly labelled and the copy was published as it had been supplied, the collaboration with Bellingcat seemed an acceptable way for the research to find an audience, given the importance of the crime.

8.2. Ukraine fieldwork Findings

As the population of Crimea voted overwhelmingly to become part of Russia 'spontaneous' uprisings followed across the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine (Sakwa 2015: 148-237). In reality these were orchestrated and supported by the Russian state with a key role played by special forces operated by its military and intelligence agencies, including the GRU (Howard and Pukhov 2015: 124-125, Galeotti 2015: 51). Sarmina writes:

> 'In Russia, information campaigns are closely linked to propaganda— perhaps because Russia has inherited from the USSR a certain experience of using propaganda for the purpose of psychological influence on individuals. The Cold War was based on propaganda mechanisms. The information war between Ukraine and Russia has a whole series of examples of "twisting facts" and manipulation with information' (2018: 197).

The war in Ukraine entailed massive use of disinformation online mainly on social networks, designed to confuse opponents (Pomerantsev 2014, 2015a). The roots of hybrid warfare lie in the Stalin era and *maskirovka*, the Soviet technique of disinformation and deception, which was to be employed in a decisive initial phase of a war (Glantz 1988). The Russian authorities mounted an online propaganda war to spread the message that Russian troops were not involved, deploying fake news both for domestic audiences (Khaldarova and Pantti 2016) and also via its international television channel RT.

At the time of the fieldwork, each side blamed the other for shooting down MH17. In September 2016, at a press conference in Holland the international police investigation announced irrefutable evidence that MH-17 had been shot down by a 9M38-series missile fired from a BUK Telar launch vehicle stationed in a field near the village of Pyervomaiskiy, an area which at the time was controlled by pro-Russian fighters (JIT 2016). Having made use of material from social media collected by the citizen journalist website Bellingcat, run by Eliot Higgins (Sienkiewicz 2015: 9-11), the police determined that the missile system had been transported from Russian territory into eastern Ukraine, and after being fired crossed the border back into the territory of the Russian Federation. This amateur collective verified and published material from social media that tracked the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine, including sightings of the Russian Buk-class missile launcher. The Russian authorities initially said that a Ukrainian Buk had shot down the plane and later came up with numerous other explanations supposedly proving they were not involved.[69] However, local people in the occupied territories continually filmed and photographed unusual-looking military equipment, including the Buk launcher. A Twitter

[69] The most accessible overview of Bellingcat's investigation into those responsible for shooting down MH17 is in their podcast, available at: https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/podcasts/2019/07/17/mh17-episode-guide-1/. Step-by-step posts showing how individual elements of the investigation were accomplished can be found on the Bellingcat website, https://www.bellingcat.com/.

user called @Wowihay had received an SMS from a friend who was on a bus in the town of Torez, on the day the plane was shot down. His acquaintance saw the Buk drive by, and @Wowihay retweeted: ‘An anti-aircraft missile system passed by us, in the city centre. 4 rockets. #Torez the direction of #Shniznhe #Stopterror.[70] They are saying it's a Buk.’[71] Matveeva wrote:

> ‘The war was fought in the conditions when the population of Donbas was heavily connected to the internet and knew how to use it. Anybody could become a newsmaker, a producer, a journalist or a photographer if they had a story that the public wanted to hear’ (2018: 206).

For months after the unrest began in eastern Ukraine, Russia denied it was sending troops across the border. Compelling evidence that the Russian government was, indeed, sending troops to Ukraine once again came from Bellingcat. International news organisations used Bellingcat as a source for news from Ukraine (e.g., among many similar reports: Gordon 2015, Luhn 2016, Sharkov 2016, BBC 2016). Higgins also shared a byline with the *Guardian* reporter Julian Borger to write an exclusive article revealing for the first time that Russia had in all likelihood shelled Ukraine from within Russia (Borger and Higgins 2015), a clear violation of international law. The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, eventually admitted in December 2015 that it was true that Russian regular troops were working inside Ukraine, saying: ‘We never said there were not people there who carried out certain tasks, including in the military sphere’ (Walker 2015). This was taken by outsiders as acknowledgement that like the previous admission that the ‘little green men’ who took over Crimea were, indeed, Russian troops. The research presented here describes how sources on the battlefield and elsewhere connected to each other in informal networks and then shared and verified newsworthy information. I also consider what journalistic value the joint news gathering activities of professional and amateur investigators added. This is important firstly because in the case of MH17, the Bellingcat investigators’ evidence is, at the time of writing, currently being used in court proceedings in Holland. The fact that these open source investigations are conducted online is a prime example of the value of transparency in sourcing.

This research setting presented reporters with some old sourcing challenges and others which appeared entirely novel, like the ‘information noise’ generated by the online messaging of the Russian authorities in a variety of forms. Bellingcat uses online tools that are freely available such as Google Maps, Facebook and v Kontakte (VK), a Russian social media platform similar to Facebook, to verify this information. Open source, a term borrowed from the computer world (Lewis and Usher 2013: 607), describes the process where readers contribute to the development of a story. In 2015, when I conducted this fieldwork, Bellingcat was describing itself as a collective of investigative citizen journalists and at the time of writing, its home page says it is the ‘Home of online investigations’. This study draws on interviews with Bellingcat investigators, their sources and other actors in

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[70] Snizhne was the launch site.

[71] The tweet is available at https://twitter.com/WowihaY/status/489698009148837888.

order to clarify the sourcing strategies used by both Bellingcat investigators and the Bellingcat sources themselves in light of the latter's declared and undeclared allegiances to one or other side in the conflict. Ojala, Pantti and Kangas note:

> 'In the context of modern conflicts and wars, Twitter features as a boundless news environment in which facts, eyewitness accounts and viewpoints can be disseminated, verified and contested by a wide range of actors. Undermining its inherently pluralising and democratising character, the platform also turns into a hotbed of disinformation and confrontation as conflicting parties attempt to mobilise support and discredit their adversaries' (2018: 298).

Ostrovsky's work is contextualised here by examining in detail some of Bellingcat's verification practices in the *Vice* film and other news events, particularly the contested versions of who was responsible for shooting down the Malaysian airlines plane MH17 in July 2014. The fact that Bellingcat's work is used as source material by professional journalists has implications for understanding how sourcing in the field is changing in contemporary war zones. I suggest some ways to understand Bellingcat's way of aggregating local sources in terms of sourcing theory about the work of professional reporters. The fieldwork provides evidence of a shift in the way professional journalists gather information about current events occurring in contemporary war zones and by doing so, verify disputed facts. The patriotic local people who collate information about newsworthy events occurring on the battlefield, are conceived here as local aggregators, another example of parajournalists.

The Bellingcat report, *MH17: The Open Source Investigation Two Years Later*, noted above, was tweeted out on the various Bellingcat social media accounts, reaching an audience of tens of thousands of followers on social media. During the period I collected data in Ukraine, the native-born Russian journalist Simon Ostrovsky was working for *Vice News,* based in New York. He is an example of a 'dual-identity correspondent' (Armoudian 2017: 6), a journalist who reports on their home country but as a correspondent for an international news organisation which is based elsewhere.[72] Initially he came to attention for being

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[72] Some of the most effective foreign news reporters of the past have been dual-identity correspondents. There are advantages for such participant-observer reporters of being simultaneously inside and outside a culture. One of many examples is Sefton Delmer (known as Tom) from the *Daily Express*, whose birth language was German, mentioned in the Cowles case study in Spain, and who later became a black propagandist working with the BBC and the intelligence services to set up a fake secret radio station supposedly broadcasting from within Germany (Delmer 1962: 77-107). The Lebanese-American Anthony Shadid, of the *New York Times*, followed an embedded American colleague with an American unit on patrol in Iraq, writing down what the local*s* really thought (Shadid 2006: 237-260). Finally, an example in this thesis is that of Henry Labouchère, doubly advantaged by his proficiency in French as a native speaker, excellent German, and relevant local knowledge.

kidnapped by a group of separatist fighters for a few days.[73] Interestingly, there is a mention in Ostrovsky's now-deleted account for the web of a fellow captive, a local civilian, who had been jailed for trying to set up a webcam across the street from the rebel HQ. The separatist troops had decided to treat the man held with Ostrovsky as a spy and locked him up. It is hard to know for sure, but as noted below, some local people in the occupied areas do share information online for the benefit of the Ukrainian intelligence services and military. Others are merely trying to provide a public service by providing information they need to know to survive in a challenging environment.

Ostrovsky covered the initial stages of the fighting in Ukraine using posts from social media as events occurred:

> 'Twitter in terms of news gathering is really important when there is a lot going on, so when events are developing, then Twitter can be key if you are trying to get to someone fast or see things that are happening quickly. But you know nowadays when things have calmed down, Twitter is just another way to get analysis about it, a way to organise articles. I mean in April 2014 we were literally cruising around Eastern Ukraine with our phones open on Twitter, waiting to see if somebody heard about a riot or an arrest going somewhere, and looking for messages like that. It was pretty instrumental for us in finding some pro-Russia protest that we happened upon. Some of them you get invited to but about some of them you don't hear about [. . .] Like "Bes" [a *nom de guerre* meaning "Demon" in Russian], also known as Igor Bezler,[74] who was one of the major pro-Russia rebel leaders for a while until he was sidelined. He controlled all Gorlovka region [in eastern Ukraine] for most of the war, and we basically saw the moment he first took over the police station because of Twitter. We were 20 km away, we just turned the car around and drove there' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

Ostrovsky's film *Selfie Soldiers* resulted from the publication in October 2015 of a report documenting covert Russian involvement in the Ukraine conflict entitled *Hiding in Plain Sight* (Czuperski et al. 2015), published by the Atlantic Council, a US think tank that promotes a stronger relationship between the Nato and the EU. Some of the most compelling evidence of Russian collusion with the separatists came from photographs posted by Russian servicemen on social media that were then verified by researchers by means of the images' metadata. Ostrovsky told me this gave him the idea of tracking one particular Russian soldier named Bato Dombayev by the use of selfies the serviceman had

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[73] Journalists in the field experience different kinds of kidnap. Compared to the concurrent experiences of hostages in Islamic State dungeons in northern Syria, Ostrovsky's treatment was far less brutal, consisting of a mild beating and death threats. *Vice News* published his account on social media, and it was widely shared. From the point of view of contemporary staff and freelance journalists alike, social media is mainly valued for the opportunities it provides for self-promotion. Had Twitter existed in the 1990s, I would certainly have posted about my own experience of being detained in Chechnya, mentioned here: https://www.frontlineclub.com/surviving_a_kidnapping_in_chechnya/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[74] Bezler has also been named in connection with MH17 in this article by the *Guardian* correspondent Shaun Walker, in which Bezler, threatens him. This did not happen often in Ukraine to international journalists, compared to the situation in Syria. See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/29/-sp-ukraine-rebel-igor-bezler-interview-demon [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020.]

taken during his journey from his base in Siberia near the Mongolian border to Ukraine. These were published on the Russian version of Facebook, which is called 'V Kontakte' (Literally 'in contact,' and hereafter referred to as VK).

> 'He was basically a professional soldier, just like every soldier in the US is a professional soldier. In Russia you have professional soldiers and you have conscripts. He started out as a conscript and then he became a professional. And you can see all that from his VK profile, because he lists which year his contract is up. Also some photographs showing him finishing his conscription service and celebrating that back in 2012' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

Bellingcat geolocated the images, so that Ostrovsky could find the same spot and stand in the place of the soldier, in a neat conjunction of traditional journalistic techniques and online verification.

> 'When you are doing a documentary film you are on a journey. You never know exactly what is going to come up. But the journey in this story took place before I went anywhere. So I discovered more and more about his trip as I was researching his online presence. I needed to wait for quite a while to see if he keeps posting things and what new information that would give. So the entire research took maybe three months from the beginning when I started and then when I kept watching his profile to know what new things he was putting up on and trying to figure out where he lives based on the photographs that he was posting' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

For the purpose of this fieldwork Ostrovsky's key contribution was to combine on-the-ground verification techniques with those which have been developed by online investigators. In his interview, Ostrovsky told me that the members of the online news audience are so saturated with amateur analysis that that if investigators on social media want to have an impact, they have to bring it to the real world in some way. If someone takes a screen grab of a photograph of a soldier and circles some key elements in red on the photograph that they want other people to pay attention to, it is not sufficient to put it up on Twitter and think their job is done.

> 'The role the pictures play generally is actually very simple most of the time. [For example] showing some marking it's like, this is a Russian soldier in Ukraine. The caption says it's a Russian soldier in Ukraine, but how do you actually know what it is? I think [. . .] if the caption conforms to your belief it makes you feel you good about what you believe. Or if the caption goes against what you believe in, [for example if] it says it is not a Russian soldier in Ukraine [laughing], then if it is going against your belief you just discard it as a fake' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

He says it is important to apply the techniques journalists have long established to verify information. This can be seen most clearly when Ostrovsky travelled to the Dombayev's home town in Russia in order to confront the man in persona at his home. In the event though Ostrovsky talked to a woman who identified herself as Dombayev's wife and subsequently called at his home to talk to him in person, a technique journalists call 'doorstepping'. The man was not there, but it was clear it was his home.

> 'Every once in a while I would send photos to [the Bellingcat researchers] Elliot [Higgins] and Aric [Toler] to see if they could help pinpoint where he lives. We couldn't be 100 per cent sure whether he would be at home when I went to try to find him. It would have been much better to confront him in person. Once I knocked on his door all bets were off, because his wife would have immediately told him that someone is looking for him and he would have gone underground. So that's why it would have been better had he been at home. You know, I went at 7 o'clock in morning, knocked on the door and he would have been asleep I would have gotten him' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

Ostrovsky explained that the traditional journalistic reporting principle, known as the 'right of reply,' in which a journalist puts an allegation to a source. This is usually presented in terms of its fairness to the source but there are also sound reasons related to the verification of facts. Ostrovsky said: 'The right of reply is dressed up as something that is a right of a person who is being investigated, but it is so much more than that. We call it the right of reply, but really it's a verification step and it helps you in your accuracy' (Ostrovsky, author interview). He says this is something that untrained online investigators can learn from professional journalists:

> 'You [. . .] have to follow the traditional rules of journalism, whether that is trying to track down the person who the photograph is about to get their version of the events, or to verify their identity, speak with them on the phone, talk to their friends, meet them in person, see some real photographs. A lot of people [. . .] from social media [. . .] don't really know the rules. So it is not instinctual to them to do something besides taking the screen grab and distributing it: "This guy is a soldier from such and such a division in Russia" and write a caption and go on with your day. You have to, at the very least, send him a message via his account and see whether he responds. He will probably tell you it's not true, but you still have to go through that' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

In Ukraine, there are plenty of sources who want to do their bit to win the war. Such people become active on social media for a variety of reasons. On the Ukrainian side, propaganda ventures are *ad hoc*, provisional and utterly unlike the well-organised, top-down equivalent propaganda coming from Russia. Some interviewees think of themselves as information warriors. These are informal sources who proudly announce that their role is to serve and pass information on to both the public and the Ukrainian military. Roman Burko runs one such site, named 'Informnapalm'. Burko says when the fighting was at its height in 2014, he passed on the location of a Russian and separatist unit to the military running the ATO (Area of Terrorist Operation, the Ukrainian government term for the occupied territories). 'Our priority was to pass the exact coordinates of the enemy in order for army to react to that by capturing or bombarding them. Because I want this war to end, not simply to write about it' (Burko, author interview). He supplied several examples of such cooperation, all of which were impossible for us to check. The Bellingcat investigator Aric Toler had retweeted information from Burko, but says his strongly pro-Ukrainian stance calls his reliability into question. The interview I conducted with Burko supports this view of him.

Other sources who are also politically partial yet less focused on doing their bit in the information war can be characterised as partisan. Understandably, these local news aggregators are not neutral when it comes to reporting the conflict. This does not necessarily imply that their posts are biased, misleading or untruthful. It just means it helps to understand what motivates the sources in order to be able to evaluate their credibility. Sources who have moved away from the battlefield re-post photos, videos and other news from friends and family who are still there and discuss each other's posts[75]. In effect they are like professional reporters in areas of conflict, who because of risk also increasingly sub-contract news gathering out to their sources (Pendry 2011: 15). It was notable that none of the Bellingcat sources I met whose Twitter handles featured actual locations in the battlefield were, in fact, located there. For example, the owner of another of my interviewees who uses the Twitter handle 'English Lugansk/@loogunda' does come from Lugansk in the Donbas, but now lives in Poltava as a refugee. His Twitter account says he publishes 'mostly translated tweets by residents of the Donbas'. Meanwhile '@Ukraineatwar' is an amateur investigator located in the Netherlands. News sources in a war zone face enormous challenges. They are trying to survive, keep their friends and family safe and some also want to help one side or the other and play their part in winning the war. Most of the interviewees said they would publish fake news on social media if they thought it helped the war effort. Some of the propagandist sources claimed to have done so. But all those interviewed in Ukraine for the fieldwork were extremely patriotic. Toler distinguished the ideological sympathies of the various parties who posted significant information on the day of the MH17 crash site (Toler 2015), including intercepted audio of separatists that was released by the SBU, and a plethora of comments from local people, both those who supported the separatists and others who supported the Ukrainian government side. He told me:

> 'Various people [. . .] oftentimes no longer live in the towns they "report" on, but have lots of friends, family members, contacts there. They give updates on the ongoing events in the town -- shellings, movements of military equipment, clashes, etc. -- from SMS messages, phone calls, Skype messages, from their friends/family/contacts back in the town. And also monitor local channels of communications [. . .] like a group chat room. They give regular updates from these sources, either just as a news service to provide helpful info to the people who are there now, or (in a very interesting objective) to provide information to the Ukrainian military and security services. Such as troop movements — there are 3 tanks going through X street, headed northwest (hint, hint, please bomb them, Ukraine)' (Toler, personal communication 3 September 2015).

Two of my key interviewees were important sources active on Twitter at the time MH17 was shot down and whose posts, published on social, media are part of the evidence being

[75] The tweets relating to the progress of the Buk in and out of Ukraine and the firing of its missile were later collated here: https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2015/07/16/in-their-own-words/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

verified by the JIT. '@HuSnizhne' and '@Wowihay' gave themselves online names that refer to locations near the missile launch site, though both now live in Kiev. 'It was a trend on social media, especially on Twitter, to name your account after the city where you live,' says @HuSnizhne. @Wowihay's Twitter profile refers to the nearby town of Torez, where he lived before becoming an internally displaced person in the capital, having been made a refugee by the war. Without talking privately to such individuals, it is difficult for outsiders to evaluate the worth of what they post online. In their interviews, @Wowihay and @HuSnizhne said they are in constant touch with friends and family who are too scared to go online themselves. @HuSnizhne had moved to Kiev before the war, but her parents still live there. They are not active on Twitter and @HuSnizhne thought it important to live-tweet news of the crash after a series of phone calls home. 'I was like an interpreter' for her parents, she says (@HuSnizhne, author interview). People there were close enough to hear members of the Buk crew talk to each other:

> 'Everybody with whom I was communicating during that time knew exactly where that BUK was, and that it was Russian soldiers [who comprised its crew]. When we hear how people speak Russian, we [can distinguish] an accent from the Donbas, or Russian from different regions' (@HuSnizhne, author interview).

As the police investigators later showed, dozens of people like @HuSnizhne were in a position to share similar eye-witness testimony: 'Some saw the BUK SA-11 moving, others the rocket being fired — this is all in open view. Here is the village, there is the field where the rocket was shot from,' she said (@HuSnizhne, author interview). 'Some witnesses were very close to the launch site,' said the JIT.[76]

Sources usually only tweet once or twice from the battlefield because people inevitably assume they are working for one or the other side, and intimidate them. @Wowihay had had his home set on fire by separatists who came looking for him after he posted two photographs of the BUK missile smoke plume that had been taken by a friend, from his balcony in a block of flats. Realising the photograph contained all the camera metadata and that a simple online search would reveal its owner, @Wowihay hurriedly deleted it and substituted a screenshot, thus concealing the metadata. A furious argument broke out online, with other Twitter users him of falsifying information. One photograph has cables in it, but not the other. Also the sky appears to be a different colour and in the second photograph it seems there are clouds that were not there before. Bellingcat said it would not publish metadata for the camera because it identified the photographer and publication would put him at risk. This failed to convince separatist supporters online, and there were consequences in the real world.

A Dutch Twitter user, Max van der Werff, was so convinced the photos were fakes he flew all the way from Malaysia to get into the block of flats where the photographs were taken but in doing so he accidentally confirmed their authenticity. He photographed and posted

[76] 0554 minutes into the animation provided by the JIT at the September press conference.

online the exact place the photo was taken from, inadvertently showing how all the elements added up, including the overhanging telephone wire that the camera had auto focused on, and other details. (van der Werff's website, where he posted his results, has since been deleted.) It became apparent that the camera's automatic settings had changed the colour balance of the clouds and sky. In the end, @Wowihay made the photographs' metadata available to Bellingcat, who vouched for their authenticity. He then helped another Twitter user, @Ukraineatwar, to geolocate the launch site.[77] Two international reporters, the *Daily Telegraph* Roland Oliphant[78] and Christopher Miller from the news website Mashable,[79] named the same location where a large area of field was blackened, apparently as a result of the back-blast of the launch. The picture @Wowihay had posted of the plume was eventually authenticated by the JIT at the September 2016 press conference. At it, the police presented a previously unknown image of the same smoke trail, found on social media, which had been taken by another source.[80] Sources like this can be called 'local aggregators'. They pull together information from a variety of local sources. People they trust may simply look out of their kitchen window and make a phone call when they observe the movements of the separatists. Others with a small amount of technical knowledge may monitor open conversations on Zello or Viber, communications apps that are popular in Ukraine. The intelligence services are known to record conversations that take place in these open social networks, as do local people. The joint police report into MH17 authenticated dozens of locally-produced pictures, video or text descriptions of the Buk missile, as well as audio. International reporters do not always appreciate how difficult it is for local people on the battlefield that is controlled by armed men. @Wowihay met a television crew from Germany led by an enthusiastic young correspondent hoping to find the Buk launch site.

> 'Their understanding of the situation was, let's say, minimal. They thought they would come there with no questions asked, film what they need, talk to everyone, make their report and leave unperturbed. Their heads were in the clouds. They were counting on, once they come there, [that] people will just start telling them everything. They just did not understand that if today someone tells something — then tomorrow he will be found dead' (@Wowihay, author interview).

Judging by the statements made by Ukrainian military intelligence (see discussion below) the sources are right to be concerned. What the face-to-face interviews suggested was a distinction between a group of social media users whose stated aim was to help the Ukrainian side win the information war, and their humbler counterparts who are more like

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[77] See: http://ukraineatwar.blogspot.com/2014/07/launch-location-detected-of-missile.html [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

[78] See: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10984530/MH17-the-clues-which-may-lead-to-missile-launch-site.html.

[79] See: https://mashable.com/2015/07/15/mh17-missile-launch-site/?europe=true.

[80] See the photographs here: https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2016/09/30/revelations-confirmations-mh17-jit-press-conference/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020].

eye-witnesses. However, when I asked research participants whether they could imagine circumstances where they would be prepared to lie if they thought it would help the Ukrainian side win the war, all of them said they could do so. All of them wanted the Ukrainian side to win and the separatists to relinquish the occupied territories.

Some of the research participants made specific claims that they had helped the Ukrainian military by supplying information in real time that had helped Ukrainian forces conducted operations on separatist-Russian forces. One interviewee claimed to have been approached by a man on Skype, who showed a medal he had received from the SBU, the Ukrainian intelligence agency, to reinforce his request the interviewee not live-tweet the movements of a Russian convoy. The interviewee was told that once alerted, the column might change direction and be harder to track. It was outside the scope of the fieldwork to investigate whether these claims were true. However, it also seemed worthwhile to find out how credible the intelligence services found any of the online patriots whom I was meeting. My researcher Mari Bastashevski accordingly approached all the various Ukrainian military and intelligence agencies to ask what use they had made of online volunteers to target separatist and Russian troops. Ukrainian intelligence agencies, including the National Guard, the ATO (Area of Terrorist Operation) and the SBU, which is the main state intelligence agency, supplied statements or agreed to on-the-record interviews about their use of local people to gather intelligence in separatist-controlled areas. From what they said, it is clear that news sources are right to be concerned for their security. A spokesman for the Ukrainian General Staff, Vladyslav Seleznyov, says that they worked with civilians in the occupied areas to gather information on their behalf. For example, civilians would film events and gather information in plain sight and then pass data on to the security services:

> ‘People who provided us with information [have] acted undercover. They did not publicise their activities. As private citizens they had the opportunity to openly document [. . .] events, memorise details, make photos and videos, as opposed to the representatives of the intelligence agencies which were also working in occupied territories. It is understandable that [the latter] had to follow the protocol for personal security and so they couldn’t work openly. Local residents had these opportunities’ (interview conducted 26 June 2016 on author’s behalf by Mari Bastashevski).

The relationship between security services and patriotic civilians eager to help is extremely chaotic, unlike the well-organised Russian propaganda system. It appears that the ATO intelligence is actually mostly irritated by social networks and states they are not only providing incorrect and inaccurate information and often endanger Ukrainian forces by publishing information about ongoing operations. The Ukrainian activist, Semyon Kabakaev, coordinated a popular hashtag on Twitter, #Stopterror, that was supposed to inform the Ukrainian military with live information on the movements of separatist units, giving the latter crowd-sourced military intelligence provided by local people. (For example, @Wowihay used it in the tweet previously noted.) We communicated by email after meeting in Kiev but Kabakayev was reluctant to explain how his worked and what, if any, use the Ukrainian forces had made of information conveyed to it in this way. Many of the Bellingcat sources who were interviewed used this hashtag when retweeting information from informants on the ground as a way of convenient indexing the conflict-related tweets from patriotic Ukrainian users of social media, in the process signalling their membership of this online community.

Of the news sources used by Bellingcat, only one investigates propaganda and disinformation used by both sides, namely a website called Stop Fake that was set up by academics based at Mohyla School of Journalism. They conduct simple checks to verify material for the benefit of the news audience, according to one of the group's founders, Yevhen Fedchenko:

> 'Bellingcat is kind of talking to expert groups and [they] do all these magic tweaks. We [on the other hand] call sources, we check information, [and take] some easy steps to explain [things] to [the] very average media consumer' (author interview).

Local people are not neutral, but as in many areas of conflict many wish the armed men who appear in their neighbourhoods would go away and leave them in peace. 'What people agree among themselves is that they definitely want the people with machine guns off the streets. Nobody wants them there [. . .] Everybody is sick and tired of it,' according to @HuSnizhne, one of the local aggregators (author interview). Other Bellingcat sources who were interviewed work directly for the military in different ways, including raising funds for the war effort. Alexandr Shulman, a former journalist then serving in Ukrainian military intelligence, told me that on the front line, social media provides the opportunity to cross-post real-time battlefield intelligence and operation in plain sight. He said: 'If a person posts something to a specific Twitter account, agreed about in advance then okay, so we need to find certain Petya Ivanov on Twitter, who will, at a specific moment, give a certain contact detail, post some information, then leave. It becomes almost impossible to track him. So it is actually much easier and safer to share information in this way than to deliver or share this over a direct phone call. And you do not use keywords, such as tanks, guns, aircraft. The word "tank" is replaced with the word "bear". The word "gun" with the word "short pencil". It becomes, "I went to the store and bought five pencils" (author interview). This illustrates both the ubiquity of social media as a platform which can be used by diverse parties on the front line, and the way nuggets of useful information exist on these digital networks amidst a vast amount of extraneous material.

Matveeva writes of the conflict in Ukraine: 'The internet played a major role in the crowdsourcing of funding' (2018: 207). An example of this came from another research participant, 'Aeororazvedka' [a *nom de guerre* meaning 'aerial reconnaissance'], who was one of the volunteers military personnel who were such a feature of the conflict on the Ukrainian side, operating reconnaissance drones for the military on the battlefield. Bellingcat republished one of their posts on a micro-site detailing apparent violations of the ceasefire agreement that showed what appeared to be a separatist armoured vehicle being blown up by a missile. In fact, the post was supposed to raise funds by demonstrating the effectiveness of the unit (Aerorazvedka, author interview). The interviews we conducted in Kiev also revealed some of the Bellingcat source's other motivations for their work on social media. Dimitri Timchuk is an occasional Bellingcat source and a Ukrainian MP. He was in the military during the Soviet period and serves on the parliamentary defence committee. As he puts it, Timchuk 'curates' defence contracts. When asked what social media was good for, he told a story of how he was able to use his large following on Facebook to put pressure on the government to pay up for a contracted payment when it was late (Timchuk, author interview).

The practical considerations affecting the work of reporters and sources in Ukraine relate to transparency, the chaotic Ukrainian response to Russian propaganda and the value that professional reporters add to amateur news gathering. For professional journalists, the location and status of sources are significant considerations. From the reporter's point of view, an authoritative source is an identifiable eye-witness who responds honestly to a reporter's questions and whose attitudes are unconcealed, transparent and whose information is therefore more easily checkable. An interview with two police detectives working for the JIT whom I met in Holland, in September 2016, highlighted their independent assessment of the veracity of Bellingcat's work on MH17. These detectives confirmed to me that Bellingcat had worked closely with them by sourcing, interpreting and verifying many of the posts featured in the press conference of 28 September 2016.[81] They clearly viewed Toler and Higgins as trusted collaborators, similar to the way in which the journalists, previously examined in these study chapters, work with other colleagues from Bellingcat.

8.3. Ukraine fieldwork Discussion

The conflict in Ukraine was a safer environment for reporters to work in than Syria had been. But military operations on the ground took place alongside an unprecedented disinformation campaign run by Russia, posing its own problems. Ojala, Pantti and Kangas write:

> 'In circumstances in which digital media have been effectively subverted to propaganda purposes, as has been the case in the on-going Ukraine conflict, news professionals become unavoidably entangled within information warfare regarding the definition of the conflict [. . .] Therefore, it is important to understand how war correspondents –- as key mediators between the public and the conflict –- deal with contemporary information war and how it may affect the enactment of their professional roles' (2018: 298).

This chapter has examined some seemingly unprecedented sourcing practices now used by reporters and source intermediaries in a contemporary digital news environment. Bato Dombayev, the Russian serviceman tracked by Ostrovsky, was only one example of vast range of potential sources upon which Bellingcat could draw in order to verify stories. Other

[81] There is an article on the Bellingcat website giving more detail about why the revelations from the 2016 press conference mattered (Bellingcat 2016b). The JIT web page, www.jitmh17.com, includes a number of intercepted telephone conversations between some of the suspects. Bellingcat also did their own independent verification of the identities of some of them.

Bellingcat sources whom I interviewed for the fieldwork can be classified into the following overlapping categories:

- Civilians with friends and family who are trapped inside the occupied areas, who provide practical information to keep their friends and loved ones safe.
- Patriotic individuals who have set up online propaganda ventures on their own initiative to expose what they see as Russian wrongdoing.
- Individuals who are hoping to promote themselves as patriots while advancing their own political and financial advantage, or to raise funds for the Ukrainian cause.
- Individuals who want to help the military and security agencies target Russian and separatist forces.

Given the number of online sources in this research who are anonymous, it is no surprise that people who post material online in social media may not be who they claim to be (Reid and Sands 2016). In the theatre of war (Clausewitz 1976), the guises that sources on social media assume display a performative or dramaturgical element. This recalls the American sociologist Erving Goffman's front-stage/back-stage distinction (Goffman 1971), by which he identified that in theatrical performances there is the obvious aspect the actors present to the audience, but also the hidden, backstage area, where players can dispense with the identities they present publicly and be themselves. This is the area I have investigated. The lesson of Ostrovsky's film is that sourcing online needs to connect the online world to events in real life:

> 'You don't have to go to the lengths that I went to, because a lot of journalism is done over the phone in an office. People should just take some minimum steps to try to establish the veracity of whatever point they are trying to make with this information source. I don't want to knock social media as a lazy way of doing journalism. We are getting so much information that governments are trying to hide [by using] social media. I just think you need to apply the same rules as in journalism, and you will be fine' (Ostrovsky, author interview).

The ways in which Ostrovsky used Bellingcat's expertise therefore has an element of Tuchman's distinction of sourcing as a 'strategic ritual' (Tuchman 1972). A great deal of the research into how new digital technologies falls into the category of being either utopian or dystopian. Many early adopters hailed the potential of social media networks to transform the sourcing and verification of news. Bell wrote: 'Twitter is already a far more effective tool for reporting, discovering, dissemination and collaboration than anything the BBC will ever produce' (2013). However, digital networks are also the principal means by which previously marginalised sources promote fake news, propaganda, deception and disinformation. The use of social media by official Russian intelligence sources to promote false narratives during the covert invasion of Eastern Ukraine (2014-present) and obscure events on the ground as weapons of war (Pomerantsev 2015b: 46-48) made such assessments appear naive. As Harrison notes: '[T]he availability of greater sources of news does not guarantee an engaged or enlightened citizenry (any more than anything else does), and easier claims to this effect about the internet and the digital citizen now seem exaggerated' (2006: 206). The Russian government, for its part, appeared to believe it was losing control of the information war. In February 2019, the Russian parliament passed a law prohibiting servicemen from carrying smartphones and posting material to social media.[82] The operational security implications of unrestrained use by soldiers of social media is something that all armies struggle with, including that of the United States (Silvestri 2015).

The reporting of the war in Ukraine is another example of a pop-up news ecology which relies on ever more curation to focus attention on what is worthwhile in a 'cacophony of alternative voices' (Wall and Zahed 2015: 731). However, for professional reporters the differences between the news ecology in Ukraine and the pre-digital conflicts of the past are principally that firstly, more news sources are now available. Secondly, we know more about them. Matheson and Allan write: 'The citizen, the amateur, the individual, the passionately partisan and the victim caught up in events all became categories of value, associated with claims to authenticity, the authority of personal experience and independence' (2009: 107). There is no longer any meaningful distinction between 'traditional' news gathering techniques and open source verification. The techniques of online verification are rapidly becoming part of the repertoire of modern journalists and it would be peculiar for modern conflict reporters not to make use of social media to gather news.

Lanoszka (2019) has cast doubt on whether the Russian information campaign in Ukraine has ultimately been effective in achieving its presumed aim of changing international policy (p. 245). However, the research in this chapter demonstrates the importance of the social networks that reporters have developed to verify facts in cyberspace. Clem writes:

> '[T]he rapid expansion of publicly generated data such as those adduced in the Ukraine crisis and elsewhere, allows the critiquing of official storylines and attributing blame in a geopolitical context beyond that previously possible. These official storylines, hitherto difficult to parse, are more likely now to be challenged without having to resort to breaches of official security. As a result, analysis conducted wholly in the public realm will almost certainly enhance the study of geopolitics and at the same time allow for greater transparency into the actions of states, especially those involving territorial conflict' (Clem 2017: 608).

Reporters do this by using non-professional source intermediaries such as Bellingcat to connect with sources on the ground but how anonymous individuals online establish trust between each other is not straightforward. Rid and Hecker write:

> 'A widespread culture of pseudonymity has evolved. Using no name or a nickname is accepted practice on the web, and not frowned upon [. . .] Trust can be established online. Ordinary people all over the world use anonymous online forums to enter into

[82] See: https://meduza.io/en/short/2019/02/12/russian-lawmakers-just-passed-legislation-designed-to-kick-soldiers-off-social-media [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020.]

transactions with other private individuals [. . .]. All of these transactions require some level of trust before that happens' (2009: 32).

How does open source investigation in areas of conflict change journalism? 'Mass communications do not have to rely solely on state outlets thanks to a declining price of connectivity' (Matveeva 2018: 205). When asked about their first contact with Bellingcat, sources unanimously said that Bellingcat first retweeted them, and got in contact only later. In the world of open source verification online, the crowd's wisdom evaluates the truthfulness of evidence in real time. As one of the local aggregators put it: 'This is the problem with open source: first we post, then we check' (@Wowihay, author interview). News organisations themselves have long struggled with whether it is important to be first with the news, or to hold off publication in order to verify a story (Gowing 1994). Bellingcat acknowledge their sources are not always trustworthy, but it is important that they are diverse: 'If they tweet something in tandem, it is more likely to be true rather than an organised disinformation campaign [like that conducted by the Russians]' (Toler, personal communication 24 June 2016).

No doubt part of Bellingcat's success is that it picks stories that coincide with the stories Western news media are also interested in pursuing. Inevitably, many of the Bellingcat investigations focus on providing counter-claims to Russian propaganda. This raises the question of how impartial Bellingcat is and whether it is convincing for the news audience if an organisation tasked with debunking propaganda only debunks the propaganda of one participant in a conflict. At the time of the research, Bellingcat's brief attempt to monitor ceasefire violations only addressed those of one side, the separatists. The fact that Bellingcat for a period received funding from Google and they have also worked with the Atlantic Council, a think tank promoting cooperation between North America and Europe (Czuperski et al. 2015) has been held up as evidence that Bellingcat is partial. However, the reports by the joint police investigation (Bellingcat 2016) and the Dutch Air Safety Board both support Bellingcat's claims relating to MH17. Impartiality does not have to lead to covering each side 50 per cent. Such an approach can accord both sides a false equivalence. A BBC guide for its journalists on how to represent all ranges of opinion while maintaining impartiality (BBC Trust 2007) concludes that a seesaw or 50-50 approach to balance does not always work well. The sheer volume of fake news and propaganda coming from the Russian side means outside investigators end up defining themselves in opposition to it. So Bellingcat has spent a lot of time trying to catch out the Russian state actors in Ukraine who said one thing and did another. Bellingcat complained in 2019 that it has come under cyber attack, apparently from the Russian authorities.[83] The current research does not address whether the Ukrainian propagandist websites' audiences are dissatisfied with the narrowness or poor quality of information they are being offered. International news organisations may believe propaganda sites lack credibility, and normally lose interest quickly when they try to evaluate the claims and counter-claims of self-appointed online 'news' sources.

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[83] See the following webpage: https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2019/08/10/guccifer-rising-months-long-phishing-campaign-on-protonmail-targets-dozens-of-russia-focused-journalists-and-ngos/ [Online. Accessed 27 August 2020.]

To sum up, the Bellingcat sources have very mixed agendas. It is understandable that these people act out of complex motives. While we cannot change this, it is important for the wider audience that anyone dealing with them be as transparent as possible in order to evaluate the quality of the information presented. Sometimes the transparency is missing. Outsiders can make mistakes with information from sources because the latter's agendas are not clear. That said, I found no evidence that any aspects of Bellingcat stories whose sources I studied are untrue, having as noted above also checked this aspect with the JIT detectives. The findings of my fieldwork, therefore, demonstrate something of the richness of the sourcing ecosystem, or interpretive community, to which contemporary journalists now have access. Sarmina points out: 'Information campaigns are by no means a new phenomenon because information has always been a part of conflict' (2018: 201). Some of the most effective interpreters of material on social media are people who are just far enough removed to be safe yet have the necessary language skills and understand local ways. The fact that a parajournalist acts like a journalist or is commissioned by a journalist to gather information raises the question about what is distinctive about the role of the journalist in an information environment where there is a blurring of the differences between journalists and other participants. This way of working tends to flatten out some of the distinctions between witnesses and reporters. Online news investigators need local people with local knowledge. "It's very hard to find anything without a hand from locals,' said @ReggaeMortis,[84] a Bellingcat Russian native-speaker researcher who is based in Kiev. He pointed that in an eye-witness statement from the day of the missile launch only a local person could explain to him that 'Cheryoma' is neighbourhood slang term for the Cheryomyshki area near the Buk missile launch site (author interview).

8.4. Chapter Summary: Ukraine Fieldwork

This fieldwork study chapter is the final one addressing the second research question investigating the sourcing practices of the present. The findings demonstrate firstly that the discovery and verification of facts using social media is a profoundly human process. Ostrovsky and other professional journalists nurture interpretive communities of local people who source, interpret and aggregate news for online interpreters such as Bellingcat. How digital data is sourced and verified from social media is continually negotiated and renegotiated online. In the final discussion chapter, I examine some of the ethnographic implications for my tribe of Bellingcat's emergence as professional reporters' source intermediaries, who both interpret news and produce it in their own right.

[84] He now names himself @Mortis_Banned.

9. Discussion

This thesis is a news ethnography which updates the classic sourcing studies of the 1970s and 1980s identified in the initial literature review (Sigal 1973, 1986; Tuchman 1972, 1973, 1978; Fishman 1980), the 'second wave' (Cottle 2000b; Ryfe 2009, 2012) and the third (Anderson 2011, 2013; Robinson 2011; Robinson and Metzler 2016; Williams, Wardle and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). Like its predecessors, my research examines the sourcing strategies employed by reporters to produce their published news texts. However, I have explored a different landscape. My research does not address what happens in newsrooms in domestic news settings. Instead, it interrogates how foreign news is sourced in the field. It is also more literally ethnographical, appropriate since the social organisation which I am studying, professional war reporters, have always self-identified as a 'tribe'. I have written this study from the point of view of a participant-observer, someone who remains somewhat within the tribe while as a scholar also located outside it. What this contributes in terms of the methodology is my flexible, multi-method research strategy. I have used multiple techniques, so-called 'thin description' (Jackson 2013), to examine the social construction of the tribe and how its reporting culture has over time reacted to external exigencies. Principally it does this by incorporating loosely-affiliated junior or provisional members on the periphery of the tribe's domain.

As laid out previously, I have interrogated data drawn from a vast terrain, extending back into the early history of war reporting and out into contemporary digital networks which give access to a multitude of new sources. In a series of case studies, I have empirically explored the ways in which staff reporters use informal source networks to verify facts in areas of conflict, highlighting the role of 'parajournalists,' intermediaries used by reporters who play an active role in news gathering, and how that has changed over time. The initial review of the literature demonstrated this is under-researched in journalism studies. My study thus makes a contribution to theory. That is, to develop a more nuanced understanding of the accommodations journalists make with source intermediaries who play a role in news gathering. To do this, I have grounded the analysis in longstanding debates within the academy about the nature of objectivity and how this has contributed to the transparent verification of facts over the course of the history of war reporting.

9.1. Discussion of Findings

In this section I outline the findings of the individual study chapters and provide an overall picture by drawing out connections and linking their conclusions back to the current state of the literature. In doing so, I show where and how our understanding of the field has been changed and how I have filled the 'gaps' identified in the initial review of the literature.

9.1.1. RQ 1: Sourcing practices of the past

The comparative approach by case study which I have taken has not been tried before. A benefit is that it clarifies some of the continuities of past sourcing practices which are deeply embedded in the culture of foreign news reporting. There have always been many obstacles in the way of the truthful reporting of war. Knightley attributes the phrase 'the first casualty of war is truth' from which the title of his (2004) study is taken to the US Senator Hiram Johnson (1866-1945) Without providing a reference, Silvestri attributes it to the Greek playwright Aeschylus (Silvestri 2016: 135). Wherever its provenance, the aphorism speaks to an ever-present uncertainty over the verifying disputed facts in time of war. I have not, therefore, made an argument for a 'Whig interpretation of journalism history' (Carey 1974: 4). And notwithstanding the problems of conducting historical content analysis which is triangulated with contemporary ethnographic material collected in the present, many aspects of the culture of reporting have changed little over time. My case studies of past sourcing practices goes beyond simply conceiving of reporters and sources to examine what might be called the grey market in news. They suggest that the antecedents of the informal newsgatherers operating on the margins of the contemporary tribe have similarities with the supposedly novel ones.

It is useful to reexamine contemporary statements about the diversity of the journalistic tribe, which imply that in the past it was less so. The ways in which professional war reporters and parajournalists in the field have negotiated their respective roles, both now and in the past, show clear continuities. Writing about contemporary war reporting, Williams writes: 'We are living in an age when the ordinary person can gather and transmit foreign news' (2011: 6). However, it was Walter Lippmann who first pointed out that 'anybody can be a journalist — and usually is' (cited in Newton 1999: v). Historians of journalism tend not to relate the practices of the past to those of the present and have failed to engage with the work of communications scholars. In turn, scholars in journalism studies are more comfortable studying the recent past, principally the 'high modern' period of journalism which corresponds to the Cold War (Hallin 1996), which tends to be taught in journalism schools. Schudson writes that a lack of historical perspective in news ethnographies written by communications scholars is one reason changes over time in news production are poorly understood (2000: 194). By linking past and present reporting practices, another contribution my research makes is to add nuance to the existing picture of the sociology of news.

The study chapters raise the question of what the enduring value of the original social science theories of journalistic sourcing is. Plainly, the picture that emerges from my research into the past and present sourcing culture in the field is not the same as that drawn by the classic social constructionist texts, with their framing of news as a bureaucratic routine. Zelizer questions she calls the 'lingering currency of "the newsroom" as a metaphor for journalism practice, a currency largely due to the studies that used newsrooms as stand-ins for a broader study of journalism' (2004: 68). She asks: 'Was the newsroom stressed because it was so difficult to study the non-routine?' (2004: 69). My research finds that probably this is so. By examining informal sourcing in *ad hoc* interpretive communities in the field, my findings inevitably undermine the dominant theoretical paradigm in the social sciences, that official sources are the primary definers, and dominate reporters. Gans wrote in his pivotal study that 'more often than not, sources do the leading' (1979: 116]) in the sourcing tango. Later studies conducted in other news environments questioned this. Strömbäck and Nord (2006) found that, in Sweden, it was journalists and not their sources who lead. Ericson, Baranek and Chan point out: 'It is not a straightforward matter to answer the question, "Who controls [whom]?"' (1989: 378). As a result of the research, how this plays out in practice is also somewhat clearer. Given the scope of digital journalism, half a century after the classic constructionist sourcing studies, we know more about how newsrooms work, but less about the sourcing practices reporters now use in the field. Arguing against technological determinism in his study of the changing technologies involved in television news production, Williams says the 'real agencies' are the social factors involved (2003 [1974]: 140).

The findings of study chapters 3 and 4 on the work practices of the reporters in 'the past' demonstrate that, as now, before the digital period sourcing was inevitably characterised by intense behind-the-scenes negotiations with officers and officials in the field. These study chapters also problematise the view, explicit in the first wave of news ethnographies, that reporters in the field were inevitably instrumentalised by their sources. Some such scholars chose to ignore other elements of the relationship. In his pivotal text *Sourcing the News*, Gans writes: 'Since journalists assume they have a right of access to everyone, little needs to be said about the ways they gain it. Although I will report on some of the difficulties they encounter, my emphasis will be on how sources seek access to journalists' (1979: 117). My study shows many different actors have agency in sourcing news. Though the case studies contain plenty of evidence to support the orthodox view of journalists beholden to, dependent on and dominated by their official sources. War reporting in the newspaper era was not very transparent. With television news, some of the constraints of the medium tended to promote more transparent sourcing of reports.

9.1.2. RQ 2: Contemporary sourcing practices in the fieldwork

Like the cases in the previous study chapters devoted to sourcing practices of 'the past', in the fieldwork chapters foreign news reporters talked about the conflicts and collaboration between members of their extended tribe. The BBC journalist, Caroline Wyatt, comments:

> 'We often talk about the media and the military. But really there are no such things. I prefer to think of us first as individuals, and then as tribes, rather than homogenous blocks [. . .] Just as any of those tribes can work together, and are part of a collective, each can also come into conflict with the other or within its own sub-tribes at any moment, and loyalties can be stretched in unexpected ways' (Wyatt 2013a).

A feature of the modern tribe is that the staff reporters, who remain its principal members, welcome new entrants on the margins who might be of service. The Channel 4 News reporter Alex Thomson told Murrell that reporters normally select fixers based on the recommendation of trusted colleagues. 'There's always a certain amount of poaching going on, and you see other correspondents sniffing around and saying, 'your fixer's good, you know"' (Murrell 2015: 97). Markham writes of the 'generalised tendency amongst war reporters to look down on personal vanity, a collective denial that the field is a fiercely competitive one, and a statement of collective membership of a romanticised tribe' (2012: 130). Contemporary communications scholars note the diversity of sources who function as news producers. But the historical cases in my study demonstrate numerous other individuals who have used their autonomy and agency to help journalists verify facts. This is another contribution made by my study to scholarly debates on sourcing. It distinguishes continuities between past practices and an apparent diversity of sourcing in the present. While Schudson originally conceptualised parajournalists as the officials and other public relations professionals who mediate interactions between journalists and sources, I have used it as a thinking tool to help evaluate the past and present of foreign news gathering, and what sources with agency contribute to the culture of news. This opens up a fresh way of thinking about the culture of foreign news gathering in the field and is another contribution of my method. Applying it to the case studies of journalists' professional practice in the other fieldwork chapters highlights the agency of sources who sub-contract news gathering, curate information and thereby contribute to published news texts.

Contemporary reporters now have access to many more sources (Phillips 2010: 97-99), making the challenge of understanding sourcing in the field even more complicated than it was before. One benefit of the extended research period is that I have had unique access to the work of Higgins and his colleagues in Bellingcat, This has enabled me to trace their development in the tribe of contemporary war reporters and how they have become an important new sub-group within it. This research highlights Bellingcat's ambiguous place within the wider reporting community. Paradoxically, as contemporary reporters have become estranged from and usurped by their sources in areas of conflict, journalists' collaborations with online investigators have reinvigorated their claim to be the custodians of fact-based reporting. Working within the field of anthropology, the ethnographer and folklorist van Gennep coined the term liminality — from the word '*limen,'* meaning threshold — in his book *Rites of Passage* (1977 [1909]: 11). It denotes the qualities attached to periods of transition in tribal society. Turner called such social transitions 'a process, a becoming [. . .] into a new achieved status' within the tribe (1974 [1967]: 94). Meyers and Davidson note: 'Journalism is becoming increasingly liminal, [. . .] understood and practiced differently by journalists and others "committing acts of journalism"' (2016: 427). This is a helpful way of understanding Bellingcat's role within foreign news. Markham writes that the qualifications necessary for membership of the modern tribe of war reporters are 'porous and uneven' (2012: 130). From this point of view, Bellingcat are the tribe's new members. They function as sources for journalists, yet have agency as news producers in their own right. As Higgins told me the first time we met, he did not want to be thought of as an investigative journalist. "I'm more interested in the investigations, to be honest, than the journalism," he said (author interview.) The fieldwork chapters highlight other examples of individuals populating the margins of the contemporary news ecosystem, those who, as Turner puts it, are 'neither-this-nor-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-not-the-other [. . .] the most characteristic midliminal period is that of paradox, or being *both* this *and* that' (1977: 37).[85]

The fieldwork shows that modern foreign correspondents' sourcing strategies coexist with those of the past, accumulating on top of the old ones in much the same way that useful old technologies persist. Winston writes: 'old technologies have a surprising resilience, an ability to absorb changes and developments' (2015: 250). Conboy also makes the important point that no mass medium has ever completely supplanted an existing one, radio being at the time of writing more popular than ever and newspapers also still exist in both print and online versions (Conboy 2011: 107), and social media did not replace television news, but enriched it. Thus, by comparing how conflict reporters construct their informal source networks and negotiate with the various source entities who populate them, a fuller and more realistic picture of the working practices of foreign correspondents comes into focus. Bellingcat epitomises what Picard sees as a shift away from the industrialised news production of the last hundred years, back towards individual entrepreneurial journalists and small-scale journalistic cooperatives that emphasise the uniqueness and quality of their news:

> 'Journalists working in this craft mode are focusing on special topics such as climate or defence, employing specialized techniques such as investigative or data journalism, or serving smaller localities as general news providers. Most are providing news directly to consumers, but some provide their materials to companies that practise the service mode of news provision. These journalists act as suppliers and partners in a business relationship that is very different from that of freelance journalists in the twentieth century' (Picard 2014: 492).

The final aspect that has not changed are academic claims about the inevitability of journalists being dominated by their sources. The findings of the study chapters suggest that this was never wholly true in the past, despite the relentless news management by officials in the field, and less so than ever in the digital period. Some scholars remain less interested in how journalists actually work than in instrumentalising them as evidence to prove an argument within the academy. Surveying the way elite public figures now publish their own news online, Carlson writes that ours may well be 'a new era of primary definers' (2016: 245). His tone is revealing when writing about journalists' sourcing, he characterises it is as 'cobbling together accounts from a few actors [. . .] This connection between source and idea or fact allows journalists to offload declarative assertions about events, whether to a head of state or a person on the street' (2016: 238). Thus he makes substantially the same argument as that advanced by Tuchman, that objectivity is a 'strategic ritual' (Tuchman 1972). Writing about the rise of the objectivity norm, and elite and official sources as primary definers, Carlson cites Reich's (2009) study as evidence that 'previous news sourcing practices and patterns endure' (2016: 238). Similarly, Shapiro et al. characterise verification primarily as a discursive strategy, employed by journalists to police their professional boundaries with the aim of keeping out unwanted interlopers (2013).

[85] The italics are in the original.

Meanwhile Hermida identifies verification as a cornerstone of journalism's professional ideology (2015: 38). Vos and Craft likewise claim that transparency is also a discursive construction (2017), and Lewis finds that professional journalists use verification as a pretext to assert that they are uniquely qualified to conduct investigations, calling it 'the professional logic of control' (2012: 854). This is where my definition of parajournalists is helpful. The study chapters have demonstrated some of the ways that non-professional journalists participate in news gathering. A more nuanced way of conceiving the journalist-source relationship might conceptualise all of the individuals involved as human beings with free will, who operate within given constraints. In Morrison and Tumber's view, neglecting to consider the human component leaves our understanding incomplete:

> 'Insufficient attention has been paid to how the journalist as an individual exercises his own judgement in negotiating his role, and more than that, the critical politicising of research in the area of mass communications has meant that the journalist as news gatherer has been pushed out of sight. He no longer fits, or rather researchers cannot find a place for him, in the grand indictment of the news as the reproduction of dominant ideology' (1988: x).

9.1.3. RQ 3: What has changed

To understand what has changed in foreign news gathering in the field, it helps to clarify what has not changed. Kovach and Rosenstiel write that verification has been learned, forgotten and now relearned and reinterpreted for the digital era (2014: 101). 100 years after Lippmann, the true purpose of contemporary professional journalists could not be clearer and his ideas are currently having a revival within journalism studies because of what they have to say about current concerns such as the impact of disinformation on news audiences and the transparent verification of facts (Suarez 2018). Meanwhile Ahmad writes of the place of journalists and their collaborators like Bellingcat have carved out in the foreign news reporting ecosystem:

> 'By coming closer than ever to an approximation of the scientific, 'objective' method of reporting originally envisaged by Walter Lippmann, the work of such open source investigators has reinvigorated investigative journalism in a "post truth" world. This is the closest that journalism has come to a scientific method: the transparency allows the process to be replicated, the underlying data to be examined, and the conclusions to be tested by others. This is worlds apart from the journalism of assertion that demands trust in expert authority' (Ahmad 2019).

Thus what the online verification of facts adds to journalism sourcing is to make it more objective. This is a key finding. It has two consequences. First, as Richard Sambrook writes, a core skill of journalists of the future will be the verification of facts. An unnamed Reuters editor told Sambrook: 'We used to need hunter-gatherers; in future we'll need farmers' (2010b: 101). This changes how we understand what journalistic objectivity is in the modern world. Some have long argued that it is essentially bogus. Advocating 'the journalism of attachment', the BBC reporter Martin Bell wrote:

> ‘I am no longer sure about the notion of objectivity, which seems to me now to be something of an illusion and a shibboleth. When I report from the war zones, or anywhere else, I do so with all the fairness and impartiality I can muster, and a scrupulous attention to the facts, but using my eyes and ears and mind and accumulated experience, which are surely the very essence of the subjective’ (1997: 8).

Second, it shifts the debate from objectivity as a rhetorical device in favour of transparency. While Schudson wrote that the journalist’s job consists of reporting something called ‘news’ without commenting on it or shaping its formation (1978), Tuchman had described objectivity as a ‘strategic ritual’ in which reporters sidestep their responsibility to interpret a story by simply attributing news accurately (1972). By contrast, Reeves and Keeble suggest that transparency works better for modern online news gathering than objectivity. They write: ‘Facts always support particular points of view [. . .] The very notion of objectivity discourages audience participation because it is presented as something that could not be challenged’ (2015: 153-154). According to this view, transparency is more about the process of working through the evidence, while objectivity tends to stress the result. With objectivity, news consumers are supposed to trust some sources more than others because they have more credibility. Writing on Harvard University’s Nieman Lab blog, Ingram writes that when sourcing is transparent, members of the news audience make their own mind up (Ingram 2009). Rupar writes: ‘The transparency of the news gathering process is important because it clarifies the mediating character of communication in news media; it reminds the reader that there is a journalist between reality and representation of reality’ (2006b: 128). In a blog post entitled ‘Transparency is the new objectivity’, the philosopher David Weinberger writes:

> ‘At the edges of knowledge -- in the analysis and contextualization that journalists nowadays tell us is their real value -- we want, need, can have, and expect transparency. Transparency puts within the report itself a way for us to see what assumptions and values may have shaped it, and lets us see the arguments that the report resolved one way and not another. Transparency — the embedded ability to see through the published draft — often gives us more reason to believe a report than the claim of objectivity did’ (Weinberger 2009).

Kovach and Rosenstiel are the main modern proponents of transparency as practice. What they say to journalists is:

> ‘The Spirit of Transparency is the same principle that governs the scientific experiment: explain how you learned something and why you believe it, so the audience can do the same. In science, the reliability of an experiment, or its objectivity, is defined by whether someone else can replicate the experiment. In journalism, only by explaining how we know what we know can we approximate this idea of people being able, if they are of a mind to, replicate the reporting’ (2014: 119).

David Weinberger writes:

> 'Objectivity without transparency increasingly will look like arrogance. And then foolishness. Why should we trust what one person — with the best of intentions — insists is true when we instead could have a web of evidence, ideas, and argument? In short: Objectivity is a trust mechanism you rely on when your medium can't do links' (Weinberger 2009).

Dmitry Kisilyov runs the Russia Today news agency, which is part of RT, 'Objectivity is an outdated concept,' he claimed. 'Objectivity does not exist. There's not one publication in the world that's objective. Is CNN objective? No. Is the BBC objective? No. Objectivity is a myth' (Yaffa 2014).[86] The journalist Dan Gillmor writes that transparency is vital precisely because of journalists' own points of view which need to be disclosed in order to understand how they have constructed their reports. In a blog post, he writes of his reporter colleagues: 'We are human. We have biases and backgrounds and a variety of conflicts that we bring to our jobs every day' (Gillmor 2005). Kovach and Rosenstiel point out:

> 'The impartial voice employed by many news organisations — that familiar, supposedly neutral style of newswriting — is not a fundamental principle of journalism. Rather, it is a helpful device news organisations often use to highlight that they are trying to produce something obtained by objective methods. The second implication is that this neutral voice, without a discipline of verification, is a veneer atop something hollow. Journalists who select sources to express what is really their own point of view, and then use the neutral voice to make it seem objective are engaged in deception. This damages the credibility of the whole profession, making it seem unprincipled, dishonest and biased' (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014: 103).

It is telling that the first two chapters of this thesis are separate. The first, the literature review, largely comprised journalists' and historians' accounts. The second examined relevant theory in the field. It is difficult to integrate the different ways that journalists and academics think about journalism. I have tried to do this in the thesis by applying theory to actual cases. One of the principal findings is that we need to change our understanding of news gathering as a culture and a practice. Previously there was little prospect that an 'ordinary' person who became a source a journalist's news report would leave their own account. The study chapters about news gathering in the past also highlight the fact journalists' informal source networks sometimes mattered a great deal, a prime example being Cowles's dealings with her Baloney Club fellow-members, Thompson and Philby. Carlson characterises pre-digital sourcing practices in journalism as occurring in the previous period of 'media scarcity' (2016: 236). In such a context, gatekeepers had far more power than they do now. The opaque informal networking evident in how Cowles and her sources used each other for their own purposes highlights this.

I conducted my fieldwork during a period when my tribe was working out how to recognise new members. A lively sub-field of scholarly work on fixers and other local news producers

[86] Sic: Kiselyov is the more usual transliteration into English. The video of his speech has since been deleted, but the final sentence of the quote survives in the New Republic article cited here, which is listed in the Bibliography.

is now thriving (Borpujari 2019, Bossone 2014, Klein and Plaut 2017, Murrell 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019; Palmer 2018b, 2019a, 2019b; Plaut and Klein 2019a, 2019b). Palmer writes of fixers as the vital 'bridge' (2018b: 321) between journalists and their sources. Whether the term 'fixer' gives sufficient recognition to such a valuable contribution to foreign news work is the subject of debate. In 2013, the Frontline Club renamed an award the Frontline Prize – instituted in 2007 as the Fixers Fund to support fixers and their families in the case of death and injury – after locally-hired staff complained the term undervalues their contribution. The Indian journalist Priyanka Borpujari, who has worked for international colleagues as a fixer, writes: 'The title "foreign correspondent" has long been synonymous with whiteness, maleness, and imperialism — journalists fly in from North America, Europe, and Australia to cover the poverty and wars of the non-Western world' (2019). Mari Bastashevski, who helped conduct my research in Ukraine, also has views on who is best-qualified to tell foreign news stories to home audiences. She posted the following message on a closed Facebook group for journalists:

> 'The cultural field has been flattened so much in the past few years that I struggle to believe a local point of view would be that much of a shock. Media professionals in Ukraine and UK are on the same internet, they watch the same Netflix shows, they share cultural references and Ukrainians are actually often much more culturally versatile than vice versa, precisely because the Anglo-Saxon media regime is the dominant one.'[87]

My own view is that international journalists often have the technical and storytelling skills and that the story needs to start from the understanding of the home audience. Very often, that point of view seems clichéd to locals.[88] I asked Neil Arun, from the Iraq fieldwork and a member of the same group, for his thoughts. He wrote:

> 'Each news outlet has a very specific appetite — and the role of the foreign correspondent is to serve up the information in a way that satisfies that appetite. A local reporter in India will have great information but will not necessarily be able to package that information for the outlet in London — any more than the reporter from London would be able to package that information for an Indian outlet' (Arun, email communication, 3 July 2019).

A further contribution of my research complicates another simplistic picture, that of news as composed of routine news supplied by official sources (Tuchman 1973). Molotch and Lester's description of news organisations as 'routines for getting work done in newsrooms' (1974: 105) is, out of date, reductive and needs to be revised. It may be that scholars who look for evidence that sourcing in newsrooms is a bureaucratic routine will always find it. But the further reporters travel away from newsrooms, the looser these bureaucratic ties become. Meanwhile the tribe as a whole continues to operate in a

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[87] Posted on Facebook on 8 July 2019.

[88] Over the years, when I sub-contracted or outsourced elements of my news gathering by hiring local news producers or fixers in order to help me produce both television documentaries or academic research, I have always credited them. There is, it must be said, no opportunity to do this in a conventional news report, though it sometimes happens when a version is put online.

challenging new sourcing environment, that of the vast world of digital news gathering. My study makes another contribution about the human relationships in news -- how they are constructed, and why they matter. In this research I have focused less on the technical aspects of what Bellingcat does and more on the human connections they make with their sources and with professional reporters. What is important for professional journalists is the journalistic value that such non-journalist source intermediaries add. Bellingcat obviously sits in the middle between these groups of people. Sienkiewicz's identification of these adjunct members of the tribe as 'interpreters' (2014: 696) clarifies this aspect.

My research demonstrates that contemporary journalist sourcing practices are rooted in ones which have gone before. Establishing the concept of boundary work, Gieryn wrote about the value of studying individuals working on the boundaries of a profession. It is analogous to the literary device of the 'foil': one comes to know the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes better by understanding his sidekick Dr. Watson (Gieryn 1983: 791). In the same way, by looking at the way foreign correspondents collaborate with others to source their stories my study highlights something important. Take the example of Marie Colvin, whose death in 2012 had such an impact on the news industry at the time, and the live audio interviews she gave by satellite phone from the scene of her death. Describing to BBC World seeing a baby die in the nearby frontline 'field hospital', over video pictures shot by her photographer Paul Conroy the previous week, Colvin elided that visit and a much more dramatic scene which she appeared to have witnessed that day. She said:

> '"I watched a little baby die today. Absolutely horrific. Just a two-year-old had been hit. They stripped it and found the shrapnel had gone into the left chest and the doctor just said, "I can't do anything" and his little tummy just kept heaving until he died"' (Conroy 2014: 203).

Palmer was the first to note that Colvin could not have been an eye-witness to this event (2018a: 133). Heavy shelling had made it too dangerous for Colvin and her photographer Paul Conroy to leave the 'media centre' building staffed by citizen activists. He describes them 'crouched like frightened rabbits in a hole' (Conroy 2014: 196). In fact, it was an activist who had filmed the dying baby at the field hospital, and that morning Colvin was shown the footage on a laptop. 'Paul, we have to get this out. This can't be allowed to slip by and disappear into the ether. They're murdering babies, for Christ's sake. We have to tell the world. It's why we're here,' she told Conroy (2014: 195). The episode demonstrates the extreme narrowness of Colvin's source network at that point. Pinned down and unable to offer any news except what was mediated by the activists, defined by me as parajournalists, she needed to publicise her story[89]. They in turn wanted her to tell the outside world that the Syrian army was indiscriminately killing many civilians, but her account was misleading. As Hilsum puts it: 'She had verified the information with the activists returning from the clinic, but broadcasting the video of the baby dying had become more important to her than clarifying that she had not seen it with her own eyes' (2018: 359). The baby was a powerful

[89] I am not criticising Colvin. It is extremely frustrating being in such a situation. Before Jouvenal and I filmed the *babushki* in central Grozny, mentioned in chapter 2, we had spent the day unable to move from a nearby basement, or work, because of the constant shelling.

piece of evidence for the international news audience and strengthened her main message. But, since there certainly were rebel fighters defending the area, it was not the whole story. Tomalin observes:

> 'To say a journalist's job is to record facts is like saying an architect's job is to lay bricks — true, but missing the point. A journalist's real function, at any rate his [sic] required talent, is the *creating of interest.* A good journalist takes [an] esoteric situation, and makes newspaper readers want to know about it. By doing so he both sells newspapers and educates people [. . .] All this is not, of course, to say that a journalist should ever be inaccurate, or false to the truth as he sees it. He must create interest while being truthful, just as an architect must create pleasing shapes that don't let in the rain (1975: 84).

My study highlights the important role individuals on the margins of war reporting continue to play in their interactions with journalists. Doing so positions reporters in their true place at the centre of shifting, collaborative groups of helpful individuals, without whom reporting is impossible. Carey writes: 'Journalism is social because, despite the pretensions of individual journalists, it is the product of many people rather than a few' (2000: 130). This matters because, as noted throughout the thesis, the shibboleth of war reporters as heroic solo operators remains pervasive. In the digital era, however, Allan and Peters write of the 'collaborative, co-operative ethos of connectivity between journalists as citizens and citizens as journalists' (2015: 1348). Meanwhile, Carson and Farhall note:

> 'in an era of "fake news" and declining public trust in media, comprehensive investigative work that seeks to serve the public may be increasingly vital to preserve both public trust and editorial quality. Collaborations and the use of digital media exemplify ways to sustain this vital role' (2018: 1909).

This fits well with Latour's idea of journalism sourcing as a perennial, collaborative process of assembly (Latour 2005) which is carried out by reporters and sources who as we have seen make up *ad hoc* interpretive communities in the field. As noted, a key finding of the current thesis is that reporters have always been deeply embedded within informal source networks in the field, for example, Calder and his community fixers. It is impossible for me as a practitioner to imagine reporters working without the aid of such individuals: such source intermediaries facilitate access to other sources. This points to the possibilities of further research into the work of parajournalists. Recent work by using the theoretical lens of boundary work has explored the importance of source entities located on the boundaries of journalism (Carlson and Lewis 2015). A fruitful area of future enquiry could be to consider Higgins and his colleagues in Bellingcat in terms of the field of boundary work. Schudson and Anderson's statement about bloggers' relationship to professional journalists now applies to the entire tribe:

> 'Boundary lines between "insider and outsider", "journalist and professional", "journalist and blogger" are blurred today and growing ever more fuzzy. Instead of a sharply defined boundary line, we might better imagine a thick, poorly defined "border

zone" made up of proliferating hybrids, shifting social and occupational roles, and networks of expertise' (Schudson and Anderson 2009: 99)

Rodgers predicts: 'It may be that in the future, the journalist covering conflict will have increasingly to share the screen and the website with those who are not professionals — but it will have to be shared, not ceded' (2012: 138). And Sambrook notes:

> 'In future, foreign correspondents are likely to be far more diverse in gender, ethnicity and background. They will speak the language and have specialist knowledge of the country before they are eligible to be appointed [. . .] be heavily networked with other specialists and with public sources in their area of expertise. Their network of sources will be counted in the hundreds [. . .] they will need social and collaborative skills. They will take steps to ensure the way they work is as transparent as possible in order to win the trust of editors and the public' (2010a: 99).

9.2. Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations and ideas for future research have been discussed throughout this chapter and will be summarised in this penultimate section. There is scope for further work in the archives, already noted, and there may possibly be more details of Ashmead-Bartlett's conversations with named junior officers, his most candid sources in Gallipoli, in the personal papers. In the case of Cowles, there is more work to be done to learn more about the effect her report had on the thinking of the war Cabinet. In the case of Calder, it would be possible to find out whether the bombing of South Hallsville was suppressed by officials and, if so, to trace the relevant discussions between the BBC and government ministries, including the MoI and the Home Office.

Scholars could use the parajournalist lens to examine other examples of collaborative sourcing practices in the field. The lesson here is that the distinction between who is a professional journalist and who is a non-professional is often fuzzier than might appear to an outsider. Another possible criticism is the patchiness of the data in the cases I have examined. It is hard to know what is missing. Also, the definition of who is a parajournalist is somewhat fuzzy. Freelance international journalists are obviously journalists, yet operate somewhat in a grey zone in foreign news production. When I was supplying news to the international television networks in Chechnya I would also have deemed it offensive to have been called a 'parajournalist' as opposed to being a journalist: as already noted, journalism is a 'porous' profession (Breindl 2016: 255). My former Frontline News colleague Vaughan Smith described to Morgan his entry into the world of professional journalism thus:

> 'I was in the army and then I tried as a microlight pilot to sell the planes the Pakistan army, with cameras mounted on them. Anyway they weren't interested. Then I was offering satellite communications and they wanted me to fly dishes in by microlight — absolutely barking. Then I flew in a photographer, Thierry, and got some footage of some action, so I enjoyed it and thought this is the life for me' (2008: 52).

It may also be objected that the definition of an informal source network is unclear. As already noted the selection of cases is somewhat arbitrary: for example, where ‘the present’ begins is debatable. It might be fairly pointed out that in chapter 4 the final two broadcast cases representing ‘the past’ have been selected from a period that is very close in time to the fieldwork case in the following chapter, representing ‘the present’. However, at the time of writing the US-led coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have almost entirely ended and consequently fewer reporters are taking advantage of the embed schemes.

My work suggests other potential studies which could be undertaken in the future. In terms of avenues for future theoretical work, scholars working in the field of boundary work could use the parajournalist lens to examine other aspects of collaborative the culture of news reporting . Reporters’ informal source networks, populated by journalists, parajournalists and sources, can as we have seen also be examined through the interpretive communities lens. This is another possible area of future research. Scholars could examine Higgins’s abusive exchanges on Twitter with the anonymous officials who curate the Russian government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs social media feed. Moving from the academic, knowledge-focused implications of my study to the practical or applied ones, future scholars might fruitfully undertake comparative studies of analogous historical and contemporary events to examine, for example, what such studies might reveal about the changes in source power and the nature of war itself, when comparing the practices of Labouchère at the siege of Paris to those of the (then) nine-year-old Bana Alabed who ‘reported’ the fall of Aleppo in Syria in 2016 by live-tweeting it.[90] (Alabed is herself also, of course, an example of a parajournalist, a news source who produced news in an area of conflict where professional journalists were absent (Alabed 2017). Finally, I was unfortunately unable to take up an offer, but would like to, made by a former news fixer in Kiev who had been conscripted into the Ukrainian army as a media operations official. He had suggested we spend time living in a trench to observe soldiers’ hyper-local, tactical and operational use of social media and how they interacted on social media with their opponents in trenches only a few hundred metres distant.

9.3. Thesis Summary and Conclusion

The main finding of this study, written from an insider perspective, is that paradoxically — as contemporary conflict reporters have become estranged from and usurped by their sources — sub-contracting news gathering in the field to intermediaries and online verification by various newsgathering intermediaries who are not staff reporters, ‘parajournalists’ in my definition and ‘sources as news producers’ by the Academy, have reinvigorated journalists’ ability to claim to be the custodians of fact-based reporting. My research also helps clarify the true role of reporter in the present, which is essentially collaborative and curatorial. Reporters verify facts in the field using source intermediaries who are autonomous individuals.

[90] The girl’s authenticity was confirmed by Bellingcat (Douglas 2018: 18).

The essential nature of the relationship between war reporters and their sources is transactional. But by historicising contemporary war reporting as I have done, the current study adds nuance to the picture of how professional reporters operate within the contemporary digital news ecosystem. Unlike newsroom ethnographies, my study focuses on informal networks of individuals operating on the margins of news gathering in the field. Describing the human dimension of the mechanisms by which reporters' sources who contribute to news gathering deepens our understanding of how foreign correspondents operate in the field.

Scholars have primarily studied the targeting of, and denial of access to, journalists in modern areas of conflict from the point of view of risk. But some of the standard texts on sourcing are overly reductive. This has partly been because the limited scope of newsroom ethnographies likewise limits how applicable they are for understanding how journalistic sourcing occurs outside the newsroom. But also because the understandable problems resulting from a lack of access to battlefields, insufficient attention has been paid to the culture of foreign news reporting and the actual practices of journalists in the field. I address this by framing the current crisis of foreign news gathering as a problem of sourcing, and by employing an innovative mixed-method ethnographic method. My approach also helpfully problematises some long-running theoretical debates within the field of sociology about objectivity and the theory of sourcing. Journalists have always collated evidence from news sources to verify disputed facts. But despite the evident challenges of reporting from contemporary battlefields, using intermediaries like Bellingcat to crowd-source hard empirical data from the field has made war reporting more objective. 'The best thing is, I feel like it's just beginning,' Higgins wrote to me (see his Twitter feed, 4 April 2019). In this respect, Lippmann's conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism, essentially the transparent, objective verification of facts, contributes to debates about the purpose of journalism in the modern era. However, the means by which facts are verified remains socially constructed.

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Appendix 1: Author interviews

In a thesis like this it is important to show my methods of working, and I have therefore identified below the principal individuals who are quoted directly in the thesis and were prepared to be identified. Unless otherwise specified the interviews were conducted face-to-face. I distinguish my contributors variously as journalists, parajournalists and sources. Inevitably, there are overlaps. As noted in the Discussion chapter, these labels are often fuzzy but distinguishing the differences between them is illuminating. I have been in more frequent touch on social media with some individuals below, including the Bellingcat investigators but have chosen to list only the more substantial interviews I conducted. Also listed are scholars who kindly helped. One interview was conducted by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar for coursework for a class I teach on war reporting.

The Journalists

Khalid al-Ansary, Baghdad IWPR reporter. 10 May 2010 (interview conducted on location by his camera operator, using my questions).
Uthman Al-Mukhtar. Fallujah IWPR reporter. 10 May 2010 (Self-shot interview on location. He answered questions which I had previously emailed).
Jon Alpert. Freelance reporter. 22 March 2017 (phone).
Deborah Amos. Reporter, National Public Radio. 12 March 2017 (phone).
Rick Findler. Freelance photojournalist. 5 September 2013 (phone).
Gabriel Gatehouse. BBC News reporter. 25 March 2011 (phone).
Phoebe Greenwood. Assistant Foreign Editor, the *Guardian.* 5 September 2013 (phone).
Benjamin Hiller. Freelance journalist and photographer. 29 May 2013 (email).
Stuart Hughes. BBC World Service producer. 24 December 2013 (social media).
Sean Langan. Film-maker, Channel 4 Dispatches. 23 January 2017 (phone).
Allan Little. BBC reporter. 18 January 2011 (phone interview by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar).[91]
Simon Ostrovsky. CNN [Vice News] reporter. 12 September 2015 (face-to-face, Kiev).
Dominic Ponsford. Editor, *Press Gazette.* 30 August 2014 (phone).
Petra Ramsauer. *Die Zeit Online* reporter, 13 September 2013 (social media).
Sean Ryan. Former Associate Editor of *The Sunday Times*. 29 August 2013 (phone).
Ahmed Saeed. Baghdad reporter. 31 March 2011. (phone, conducted on behalf of the author by Salman Adil Turki).
Richard Spencer. *Times* Middle East correspondent [*Daily Telegraph*]. 23 August 2013 (social media).
Alex Thomson, Channel 4 News reporter. 18 July 2016 (phone).
Tim Whewell. BBC reporter. 4, 5, 7, 8 January 2018 (emails).

[91] Interviewed by University of Kent student Lucy Ross-Millar.

The Parajournalists

Salman Adil Turki. IWPR support staff. (Erbil, Iraq).
'Aerorazvedka'. Activist. 11 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
Roman Burko. Activist. 11 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
Eliot Higgins. Bellingcat. 12 November 2013 (University of Kent).
'@HuSnizhne'. MH17 local aggregator. 11 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
'English Lugansk' (@loogunda). Activist. 12 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
'@ReggaeMortis'. Bellingcat. 11 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
Alexandr Shulman. Intelligence officer, Ukraine army. 11 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).
Dimitri Timchuk. Member of Ukraine Parliament. 10 September 2016. (Kiev, Ukraine).
Aric Toler. Bellingcat. 24 June 2016 (social media).
'@Wowihay'. MH17 local aggregator. 12 September 2015 (Kiev, Ukraine).

The Sources

Doug Beattie. Former British Army officer. 25 January 2017 (phone).
Charlie Knaggs. Former British Army officer. 11 March 2017 (phone).

Others

Harriet Crawley. Daughter of Virginia Cowles. 13 July 2016 (London, face-to-face interview).
David Deacon. Historian/social scientist. 15, 21 May 2017 (emails).
Yevhen Fedchenko. Mohyla School of Journalism. 10 September 2015 (Kiev, face-to-face interview).
Jenny Macleod. Historian. 23 February 2017 (email).
Jean Seaton. Historian. 21-23 February 2020 (emails).

Appendix 2: sample fieldwork transcripts

1. @Wowihay [Note that this is a Twitter handle and his real name is redacted]. Kiev, Ukraine 12 September 2015.

They’ve created a witness protection program where they are offering to relocate the witness.

[NAME REDACTED] Это понятно, программа.

I understand, a program.

[NAME REDACTED] Как выехать? Вот. Хочешь-не-хочешь… Свидетелей – море. Море. Кто видел Бук этот проезжавший, кто видел запуск ракеты. Это все, вот оно, рядом. Вот поселок – вот это поле, с которого стреляли.

How to migrate? There is a lot of witnesses. A lot. A sea of witness. Those who saw the BUK SA-11 moving, those who saw the rocket being fired. This is all in open view. Here is the village, here is the field where the rocket was shot from.

Мари. Они очень запуганы и не видят перспективы.

Mari. So are they all so frightened they do not see the perspective in testifying?

[NAME REDACTED] Да, потому говорить…

Yes, that’s why it’s ridiculous to talk about . . .

Мари. Говорить про какую-то Голландию в Торезе…

Some kind of Holland in Torez.

[NAME REDACTED] Я точно знаю человека, у которого было видео Бука, проезжающего через Торез. Он говорит, я его никуда не дам. Потому что только я его покажу, видно будет, откуда я его снимал, а мне, говорит, такие проблемы не нужны. Я говорю, оно у тебя хоть осталось? Нет, говорит, держать его у себя я не стал.

I know a guy for sure who had a video of the BUK SA-11 passing through Torez. He says he won’t share it with anybody. He says that if he does, it will be immediately obvious where he filmed it from and, he says he does not need such problems. When i asked him later whether he still has it, he said he didn’t keep it.

45.21 [NAME REDACTED] То есть, есть много свидетелей. Но говорить об этом…

So there are a lot of witnesses. But it's useless to talk about it.

Мари Но это все-таки была прекрасная возможность уехать в Нидерланды на обеспечение. Или нет веры такой, что возьмут?..

But it is a great opportunity to move Netherlands for a safe and secure life

[PENDRY NOTE: He is talking about the JIT witness protection programme.]

Or does no one believe that it could happen?

[NAME REDACTED] Как это говорит? Как говорит мой папа, я, говорит, не для того построил этот дом на этой земле, чтобы отсюда уезжать.

Well, it's like my father says "I did not build a house here to leave it behind."

2.Uthman al-Mukhtar, Fallujah, Iraq reporter. 10 May 2010.
[With camera time codes.]

00 -04:28:22 - 00 -05:29: 24
Working in Fallujah is different from working in Baghdad or in Kurdistan. As you may know, Fallujah has a special nature; it is an isolated, enclosed city. It has a tribal and religious aspect. It has suffered a lot after 2003.

00 -06:23: 16 - 00 -06:55: 24
Currently, Fallujah is closed. It has a northern and a southern gate. No one is allowed to leave or enter without being scanned by the police. You need a warrant to leave or enter the city. Due to these circumstances, working in Fallujah is extremely difficult. Socially, a journalist is considered a traitor working for the Americans or the Iraqi government. This is one of the misfortunes of this occupation; we try to give the impression that the journalist is independent, a messenger who tries to report the truth objectively.

00 -06:56: 24 - 00 -08:03: 00
Villagers, city dwellers, not all of them though, look at the journalist as someone who is loyal to the government. Someone who is loyal to the US troops. When we try to explain to them that this is wrong they say that the government and the American won't allow anyone to publish something that tarnishes their reputation. And this is the reason behind the label that they attached to journalists.

00 -08:05: 00 - 00 -08:33: 10
When a journalist in Fallujah is beaten and humiliated it will go unnoticed, unlike in Baghdad where such incidents are given much attention.
In the story I am going to report in minutes, for instance, if I got beaten by the police, or kidnapped and killed by the police, no one would go after them to claim my rights. The reason behind this, in my opinion, is the union of journalists. I have been threatened many times by officials here, we can't stand for these threats because that would mean I have to sell my house, take my wife and kids and leave the place and relocate somewhere else to be able to say that this or that official has threatened me to not publish a story

00 -08:34: 10 - 00 -09:55: 11
One example of that is a story I tried to publish about stealing medical supplies [by government officials] and how that had an impact of suffering on the disabled, the elderly and children. I couldn't publish the story because I received a covert threat from an official. When I was in university I learned a British rule: no story is worth your life. That's why I dump many stories that are not worth my life. I love when I go back to my family and spend time with my kids. I strongly believe in the saying: a little that lasts is better than a lot that is cut off. And what I mean by a lot is bold stories that might lead to my demise.

Appendix 3: Quantitative survey of freelance logistics group for Chapter 6: Syria fieldwork

On 22 May 2013, the freelance Channel 4 reporter Inigo Gilmore posted the following request on my behalf, soliciting contributions by the journalist members of a closed Facebook group set up to share confidential practical information about working inside Syria.

'A friend of mine Richard Pendry — a very experienced journalist and filmmaker who has covered many conflicts and is now working at the University of Kent — needs help with research into Syria and freelancers trying to work there...
here is what he wrote to me below (please respond if you can help in any way — his email is below too):

REQUEST BEGINS:

I want to hook up with freelancers making trips into Syria for a piece on the difficulties freelancers have selling their work in Syria.

I am following a number of stories of people who have been refused by commissioning editors for a host of different reasons. Some freelancers have been told to come to London before a channel will buy their work. Other people are judged too inexperienced to work in Syria at all.

This is off the back of a recent survey by the Frontline Club which revealed a significant number of freelancers would forgo the support of news organisations if it meant they have the chance of a sale.

I am a film maker and journalist, working at the University of Kent. I have reported from Chechnya, Afghanistan and Iraq and worked at Frontline News Television with Vaughan Smith and Peter Jouvenal. I have an academic grant to do this story and plan to do a text piece for an academic journal such as *Ethical Space* and will offer a piece to *Media Guardian*.

I would like to hear from freelancers who are having difficulties negotiating the sale of their work. I'm happy to talk to my contributors about making them anonymous if necessary.

Ends

Appendix 4: Unpublished text supplied by Virginia Cowles's daughter, Harriet Crawley. Cited in chapter 2, Discussion section.

A Few Words of Presentation.
31 January 2011.

Speech by Carlos García Santa Cecilia for Spanish edition of her book, (translated from the Spanish by Sylvia Hilton, Madrid University):

Desde Las Trincheras: Una Corresponsal Americana En La Guerra Civil Española. Madrid: Siddharth Mehta Ediciones.

A few years ago, when I began to take an interest in foreign reporters of the Spanish Civil War for one of the courses I was teaching at the university, my attention was powerfully engaged by a fascinating woman called Virginia Cowles. Specifically, between April and May of 1937, when Madrid was under siege, here was an attractive and elegant young woman going down the Gran Vía, which had been pitted by bombs, her thick gold bracelets rattling as she jumped over the holes in her high-heeled shoes.

This often-cited image of a privileged American woman in the hell-hole of Madrid as it was being bombed arose, in my opinion, thanks to the cruel and envious description written by another reporter, of a different sort, called Josephine Herbst. There is another anecdote according to which, on one occasion when Virginia was travelling with Hemingway, a group of militiamen went by singing, and she remarked: "¡What a pretty song!" Hemingway, in his usual superior tone/crushing way, replied: "It is *The [Socialist] Internationale*." I have not managed to find out where he reported this incident (perhaps in one of his chronicles), but I have read testimony in which Virginia Cowles denied being that naive American reporter depicted by Hemingway. The style of the early chronicles signed by her and published in Hearst's chain of newspapers towards the end of June and in July of 1937, and even the publication of the book *Looking for Trouble* in 1941, promoted as: "The first great book by an American <u>girl</u> correspondent" (underscoring "<u>girl</u>"), possibly contributed to create that image.

Virginia Cowles, as I have said, was a mystery to me. I was able to find only disquieting information, like this phrase in her biography in the Oxford Dictionary: "Virginia rarely mentioned her past." How was it possible that a woman who came from what today we would call real-life romance, gossip or tabloid journalism, and who had no other qualifications as a journalist than her curiosity, had managed to write one of the most interesting accounts of daily life (on both sides, to boot) during Spain's Civil War.

Certainly none of the big monographic studies of the Civil War are free of its influence. Moreover, several of her observations have been fundamental for our understanding of some facts, like the testimony that she collected of an old man from Guernica, and the later confirmation of the bombing by rebel officers. The vision of the human side of the conflict offered by Virginia Cowles has been gaining more and more interest, while other perspectives have gradually lost interest with the passing years.

That is why it is important today, 75 years after the start of the Civil War, that we can finally read this account in Spanish. I think that there could be no better nor more opportune contribution to commemorate this date. In addition, the magnificent and revealing prologue written by her daughter, Harriet Crawley, shows us at last the human being. Virginia Cowles was a descendant of four of the signers of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (which in American terms is tantamount to inheriting four noble titles), and the Cowles had settled in North America at the same time as the mythical pioneer John Smith, but she was not a spoilt and capricious female of privileged class, but a self-made woman who was combative, inquisitive and tenacious, and who had learned about the worst side of journalism from her mother. She knew what she wanted when she arrived in Spain, and she got it.

Virginia Cowles's account speaks for itself. It is a thrilling adventure, as well as a rite of initiation. Virginia did not hide her inexperience, but her desire to understand what was happening, her curiosity and her boldness made her the great reporter that she was.

Her arrival in Valencia, in March 1937, certainly caused a stir. [She arrived] with no understanding of the language, not knowing where to go, without contacts, without local money, carrying her Remington typewriter in one hand and in the other her suitcase, which just happened to sport the enemy colours. [She made] the journey to Madrid in the company of the sagacious and inquisitive priest, who ended up stealing tobacco. Her description of the Hotel Florida, in Callao Square, is among the best reconstructions of the work and the living conditions of the foreign reporters in Madrid under siege. She also wrote of the hunger, of the bombings and of the resignation of the population. Virginia Cowles does not hesitate to submerge herself in the underground worlds of spies and black marketeers, in which individuals like José Quintanilla operated freely. Quintanilla would play a vital role in the quarrel between Hemingway and Dos Passos over the 'Robles affair'.

Virginia Cowles also visited the military front lines, accompanied by eccentric individuals, concluding her adventure in the republican zone with the visit-abduction to general Gal, one of the most ominous officers of the Civil War. A few weeks after her hasty departure from Spain, Virginia Cowles returned to the 'national' zone in the private airplane of Rupert Bellville, a pilot, playboy and bullfighter who was flying to San Sebastián on his own account. Virginia took part in this adventure without hesitation, showing great courage and boldness.

Throughout her account, the author reveals her point of view: "I had not sided with either party in Spain. I was much more interested in the human aspect: the forces that pushed people to such tests of resistance and the paradoxical mixture of fierceness and tenderness that emerged from their suffering. I was constantly surprised by the impersonal character of wars." She arrived in Salamanca and gave a perfect description of the presence of German nazis and Italian fascists; she attended the ceremony of the presentation of the diplomatic credentials of the Italian ambassador on 1st August, 1937, and she listened to an orator who maintained that Spain should reconquer not only Gibraltar and the [lost] North African possessions, but should also contemplate [regaining] South America.

Where does the magic of this account lie? Why is it so interesting today? I think that the secret is in this phrase: "I wrote about the things that I had seen and heard, but I did not try to interpret them." It is as if we could open a window and see, directly, without ideological filters or speculations, what is happening. This freshness of a direct gaze, sincere (and of enormous talent) constitutes, in my mind, the chief value of the book, and it introduces us to a reporter who had innate talents for journalism.

In 1938, *The Times* of London and the *New York Times* employed her as a reporter and she returned to Spain. Her chronicles show to perfection a special envoy who knew the situation of the country, who was capable of analyzing events, and who did not forget the human side of those who were suffering amidst the conflict. I chose one of these chronicles for the exhibition of which I am a commissary, *Foreign reporters in the Spanish Civil War*, which was inaugurated in New York in 2006 and which since then has been seen in nearly 30 cities and a dozen countries in the world. Currently it is on show in Manila.

I would also like to offer a brief overview of the reporters in the Spanish war, which concentrated a constellation of exceptional journalists, writers and intellectuals; in what the historian Hugh Thomas, in his monograph on the Civil War, has called "the golden age of foreign correspondents." Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, John Dos Passos, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, George Orwell, Ilya Ehrenburg, the spy Kim Philby… Virginia Cowles met nearly all of them, on one or the other side.

Contrary to what might be supposed, the outbreak of the war did not excite too much interest in the international press. It was thought to be just another military coup, of nineteenth-century type, but after the first few weeks several factors made Spain front-page news: the division of the country into two zones, the lightening fast and bloody advance of the rebel forces, the revolutionary outbursts, and above all, the internationalization of the conflict, with the intervention of Germans and Italians on one side and Russians on the other. Nonetheless, after 1938, when the nazis were advancing in Europe, news from Spain became just a brief article in the middle pages, even though such long and cruel battles as that of the Ebro River were still to be fought.

Spain's call was answered by the great professional writers of the day, who waged an information war in her fields, at a time when the journalistic account, the chronicle, had not yet been swept aside by the power of the image, and in a place where it was still possible to inform from either side with no other luggage than curiosity.

There was no lack of professional journalists, among them the North Americans like Lester Ziffren, chief of the news agency United Press in Madrid, who sent reports from the very start, or of ideologically committed reporters, like Louis Fischer, who wrote for the communist daily newspaper *The Nation* and enjoyed the best sources among the republican leadership, or like Jay Allen, who knew the country, spoke fluent Spanish and was the first to obtain from Franco a declaration in which the rebel general spoke plainly of his plans to lead a crusade at all costs. Fischer, Allen and many others, like Claude Cockburn, were deeply invested in the republican cause, and sometimes exchanged the pen for the rifle.

The best reporters from the big popular newspapers came too. Only four days after the start of hostilities, a charter plane flew over the Pyrenees carrying the best known reporters of their day: the Englishman Sefton Delmer, of the *Daily Express*, the Frenchman Louis Delaprée, of *Paris-Soir* (each boasting two million readers), and the American H.R. Knickerbocker (with many others, representing the powerful newspaper chain directed by Hearst). They landed in Burgos, in the heart of the rebellion, ready to shake the world with their sensational stories.

The fast and unstoppable advance of Franco's forces seemed to mean the end of the journalistic adventure in the month of November 1936, when the African army reached the gates of Madrid. According to a well-known anecdote, at a table in the Hotel Gran Vía, opposite the Telephone Company building, the foreign correspondents made bets on the number of days and even hours that it would take Franco to capture the capital. Only one of them insisted that he [Franco] would never enter [the city], but he later admitted that he had said it solely to enliven the evening.

(It is worth noting that all the foreign correspondents stationed in Madrid in 1936 could sit around a single table. In the latest war in the Lebanon, five years ago, around 4,000 journalists and support staff were officially authorized. That is as many as the number of soldiers mobilized in the international force of interposition that ended the conflict. It would be interesting to query whether we are better informed today.)

Let us return to Spain. In November 1936 came the great and unexpected news: "Madrid resists." For the first time, a popular army was capable of defeating, or at least checking the fascists. It was then that the Americans arrived; not the professional newsmen, or the ideologically committed journalists, or the great reporters, who were already there, but that *tribe* that would accompany special envoys when big news was breaking. Roaming through the Hotel Florida, that Virginia Cowles so ably described, were individuals like the American bullfighter Sidney Franklin and even the actor Errol Flynn.

The forerunner of them all, the prophet, was possibly Herbert L. Matthews, of the *New York Times*, a scrupulous and melancholic correspondent who reported with precision and revealed all the informative potential of the conflict. Madrid became the capital of the world, and the Hotel Florida was at its centre. It was there that, in the early morning of 30th March 1937, Virginia Cowles arrived, with her suitcase showing the enemy colours, her Remington and her enormous talent, to write an account which would transcend the barriers of time and space, one of those accounts that could touch people's hearts.

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THESIS ENDS