Appendix A: Further information about the content and framing analysis

Chapter 3 details the measures devised for our content and framing analysis. Examples of the detailed criteria provided to coders for assessing thematic frames can be found in Appendix B. For those interested in further details, the codebooks devised for the television and press analysis are available at the Economic and Social Data Service (www.esds.ac.uk), entitled 'Content and Framing Study of United Kingdom Media Coverage of the Iraq War, 2003' (catalogue code SN 5534). The databases, detailing all the results, are also available at this site. All of these documents are also available from the authors: piers.robinson@manchester.ac.uk, p.goddard@liverpool.ac.uk.

How we did it

Coding was performed using a Microsoft Access database, allowing the handling of both text and alpha-numeric data, enabling flexible sorting and interrogation of data, and offering the facility for the export of data to Microsoft Word or Excel for the production of tables and spreadsheets. The database was adapted from earlier ESRC-supported election studies, which developed this approach to analyse sensitive and detailed data from election news content (see Semetko et al., 1991; Goddard et al., 1998). Two coders were trained over a period of five months and spent approximately six months coding, testing and analysing the results.

The sample

All stories related to the Iraq War were coded from the main evening news broadcasts of the two major terrestrial channels, BBC and ITV, and from the 'alternative' Channel 4. We also included a segment from a non-terrestrial 24-hour news channel, Sky News (10.00 p.m.–10.30 p.m.), in our analysis, although we were unable to obtain weekend coverage for this channel. Our unit of analysis was the story and, as Althaus (2003) advocates, we analysed

the 'entire population of relevant news stories' rather than sampling within bulletins. In total, our sample contained 1,063 stories from television news.

With respect to newspapers, we coded all editorials, and all major news articles ($n = 4449$) appearing on the Iraq War pages of seven national newspapers – *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, and their Sunday equivalents. Owing to the large number of news articles, coders selected the three major news articles from each page of the Iraq War sections of the newspapers. In practice, this ensured that all significant articles were analysed and only brief articles excluded from the analysis. Articles written by experts, 'news in brief' and political sketches were omitted. The occurrence and subject description of the excluded stories ($n = 444$) were noted in the database.

The coding period was from 17 March to 18 April 2003, beginning three days before the invasion, continuing through the 'major combat' phase of the war, and ending four days after the fall of Tikrit. In addition to the 'major combat' phase, our survey period enabled us to examine pre-war coverage during the controversial Commons vote on military action as well as events following the fall of Baghdad when the issue of post-war law and order rapidly moved onto the news agenda. However, the principal findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 are for the invasion period itself (defined as 20 March to 14 April) when military action was ongoing.

Reliability

Particular attention was paid to reliability issues in relation to the thematic frames (our main framing measure). One hundred stories were selected at random and subjected to inter-coder reliability tests. As well as testing aggregate reliability with respect to framing, we also monitored coders' identification of the subjects to which these framing codings were applied to ensure that there was agreement over their use. Monitoring at this level of detail was considered useful because it allowed examination of the precise criteria coders used to arrive at their judgement, thus rendering the process of making framing judgements more transparent than is often the case. For example, studies often require coders to decide whether an article is, say, critical or supportive. Even if both agree that an article is critical, 'this still leaves the precise criteria by which each coder decided that the article was critical undisclosed to outside observers' (Robinson, 2002: 138–9). The method employed here, however, sets out the precise criteria (coding frames) by which the coder should assess a story and allows an outside observer to see, for any given story, the precise rationale used by the coder in judging the story. So this method provides an 'explicit, codified and public' (King et al., 1994: 8) approach.

Reliability coefficients, using Holsti (1969), of 0.98 (television news) and

0.93 (newspapers) were reached for coding frames. To eliminate the possibility of chance agreement in the use of a three-point scale, Scott's pi was calculated for the television results and we achieved a reliability coefficient here of 0.95. The rarely-used subject framing and overall story framing measures were subjected to simple reliability testing (i.e. Holsti, 1969). Coding of the other variables (story subjects, story actors, etc.) was subjected to reliability testing also using Holsti's method. Here, owing to the large number of variables (e.g. 18 different story subjects), there was little likelihood of chance agreements and, consequently, Holsti's method is an appropriate indicator of reliability (Neuendorf, 2002). With respect to these variables, a reliability coefficient of over 0.90 was achieved.