



Tampere University

School of Management – International Politics

**The Prime Minister's Glasses**  
*World view in Great Britain at the end of  
the Cold War, as portrayed in the BBC sitcom  
Yes, Prime Minister*

Gabriel Herrera

Pro Gradu – Thesis

December 2011

Tampere University

School of Management

HERRERA, GABRIEL: The Prime Minister's Glasses – World view in Great Britain at the end of the Cold War, as portrayed in the BBC sitcom *Yes, Prime Minister*

Pro Gradu – Thesis, 91 pages, 2 appendices.  
International Politics

December 2011

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This thesis is an investigation into what the television series *Yes, Prime Minister* tells us about the views people held about the world and Great Britain's place in it during the later half of the 1980's, a period of significant importance, since it marked the end of the World War. Furthermore, the thesis attempts to find if these views can be expressed through some theory of international relations, as theories are taken to be frameworks through which we make sense and understand reality. *Yes, Prime Minister* was chosen due to its strong emphasis on the higher levels of government and foreign politics. All 16 episodes of the series were used and amended by a single stand-alone episode, which sets the basis for most of the characters and plots.

The basic assumption of the thesis is that popular media and particularly political satires, both reflect the views of its audience, as well as, influence and fortify these views. In other words, political satires can be considered commentaries on actual events and for a satire to be popular it has to express in exaggerated form what the audience commonly feels. As such, political satires are political in nature and influence, granting them a place in our everyday political lives. *Yes, Prime Minister* was, and still is an extremely popular television series, making it an ideal source for investigation. Satires also serve as educational and informative programs to many of their viewers, bringing into focus many of issues commonly overlooked by traditional news media and ridiculing these. As such satires help to unmask and demystify the subjects they deal with and by teaching their audience, they also influence how the people will consider these subjects in the future, in this case the British government. Foreign relations and international politics have been traditionally seen as something detached from the common citizen's life, which is best left to the purview of governments. By exposing the workings behind many of the decisions governments take with respect to foreign affairs and making these workings understandable, the audience is emancipated and more capable of judging its government's deeds.

Discourse analysis, together with elements of semiotics, allowed approaching the series from both the textual, audible and visual perspectives and made it possible to identify of the underlying discourses present throughout the series in the most accurate way. A total of six discourses were identified, many of which could have been classified under the common heading of power-discourse, but were taken as separate ones in order to better distinguish their particularities. The fundamental epistemological and ontological views present in the separate discourses were then used to identify a theory of International Relations which complies with these. The English School theory was found to correspond with these basic views and the views presented in the series were then explained through this framework, or as the title calls it through these glasses.

The thesis demonstrates how a product of popular media can be used to identify what the audience values and believes at a given time.

Keywords: politics, entertainment, media, politicainment, discourse, satire

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## Acknowledgements

This Pro Gradu - thesis is the culmination of my Master's studies in International Relations. The path to its completion has been longer than originally anticipated by myself, my friends, or my family. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those that have had a special role in helping me navigate my way to its completion.

Firstly, I would like to thank my professor and supervisor Heino Nyysönen for his support and advice in the thesis. Being from originally from a slightly different field, his views were eye opening in many cases. I wish to sincerely thank the professors and staff, many of whom I now call friends, in the former department of political science for their patient teaching and friendly demeanour as well as the department itself for withstanding my presence there throughout these long years. For allowing me to just "take it easy" I thank my friends from secondary school Mikko Myllymäki, Antti Järvenpää, Ville Hedman and Tomi Siromaa. My other friends deserve similar praise, but these four have stood by me the longest. Tiina Kotti, my former girlfriend, now a valued friend, you were instrumental in the formulation of this thesis and supported me through several years before it. Last, but not least, I wish to especially thank my family, my mother Arja Jokelainen, my father Luis Herrera and my sister Cristina Herrera for their undying support and faith in me.

# 1 Background and material

The power of television has lied for decades in its perceived characteristic of being absolutely at the mercy of the will of the audience. It is not perceived as having any real power over the views and values of the people watching it, for they may at any point opt to turn off their set and that way release themselves from the media's influence. Yet, a growing number of studies, in particular in the fields of journalism and political communication, have shown that with the popularization of media and particularly the television medium, its influence on trends, views and particularly values is far from negligible. It may be safe to say that this is not a particularly new development, but rather that we have only recently begun to understand it and afforded it its just place in academic research.

The fact that politicians are constantly more present and political ideas are increasingly passed through entertainment programming begs the question of where the limits between politics and entertainment really lie. There seems to be an increasing emphasis on image over substantive issues when approaching contemporary politics and politicians.<sup>1</sup> While this is most apparent when observing political campaigns or reality shows with political figures, particularly the latter is a very recent development. I found myself asking weather there are more subtle ways that media constructs the image we have of politics and could it already have done it without us knowing. I concluded that it is therefore worthwhile to investigate the views portrayed in some popular series and find out what view of the world it helps to create. I picked a series from a time before the rise of reality television, but think it is relevant to better understand our present.

The theme for the thesis was arrived at inductively from the material to be analysed, formed by the popular BBC sitcom 'Yes, Prime Minister' (later referred to as YPM), not in the traditional positivist form of first stating a research problem, then finding a suitable theoretical framework and finally using an appropriate method of analysis to check for the validity of the set hypothesis. Instead this study began by the selection and reading through, or in this case watching through, of the material. The research question was then formulated from the material and an appropriate method for analysis decided upon.<sup>2</sup> I have to admit though that the formulation of the research question and the choice of method have undoubtedly been influenced by my the ontological choices that I have made prior to watching the series. Furthermore, the choice of method carries within it theoretical assumptions. Thus there is a clear link between the ontological, methodological and theoretical within this thesis, despite attempting to be material driven.

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<sup>1</sup> McNair 2007, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 2.3.2.

I chose to investigate one of my all-time favourite political satires because I felt I have always considered it witty and a surprisingly accurate description of the relationship between politicians and civil servants. I have often referred to it humorously as mandatory study material for anyone studying Political Science or International Relations (IR), yet I hadn't given the matter any further thought. This thesis proved a remarkable opportunity to see the series from a new perspective and gain more insight into it. Scott Nisbet has written a short summary for the internet movie database of the series as follows.

“Following a series of circumstances involving the Eurosausage, the Home Secretary drink driving and the Chancellor's dalliances with a shady lady from Argentina, Minister for Administrative Affairs Jim Hacker finds himself elevated to Number 10 Downing Street without being quite sure how he got there. But life as Prime Minister is no easier than being a Minister; Hacker still finds his every move challenged by the Civil Service as represented by his new Cabinet Secretary, the ever-wily and manipulative Sir Humphrey Appleby, who is as equally determined that nothing should change as Hacker is that changes should be made. Wandering nervously between them is Bernard Woolley, Hacker's private secretary, who continues juggling his responsibilities to his political master with his loyalties to his Civil Service colleagues...”<sup>3</sup>

The selected material consists of the entirety of YPM's episodes, first aired in the years 1986-1988. This totals 16 episodes. I have also amended the material by including a single standalone episode from the year 1984, which is a tie in between the precursor series 'Yes, Minister' and the actual material. The reason for doing so is that the episode in question has a strong international theme to it addressing the relations of the Great Britain with the European Economic Community (EEC). Almost all of the episodes have some interface with foreign politics, even if it is only indirect. The cropping of material is done so that only those episodes in which no linkage, direct or indirect, to the international realm exists are left without comment. Care is taken not to discard episodes that traverse the traditional boundaries of domestic- and foreign policy, even if the foreign policy aspect is only implied. Essentially, all the episodes are analysed, even if they don't directly address the research question. There is a clear benefit of having a televised series as material, as opposed to a purely textual manuscript, that facilitates finding even the implied connections between national and international. Since televised material incorporates both visual and textual communication, it allows us to interpret a wider variety of signals and intentions and hopefully leads to a more accurate analysis.<sup>4</sup>

One reason for choosing a series from so far in the past, apart from the obvious significance of the era (end of the Cold War), is that YPM can be seen as having been one of the most influential windows into the inner workings of number 10 Downing Street, albeit presented in a humorous manner. The characters and plot twists of YPM are routinely referenced even in today's British

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<sup>3</sup> "Yes, Prime Minister" (1986) – Plot Summary, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086831/plotsummary>.

<sup>4</sup> Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 6.4.3.

media. They are seen to epitomizing some characteristics of certain positions and tasks within the political structure of Great Britain. For example in one number of the current affairs magazine *The Week's* British version, when paraphrasing of an article from *The Sunday Telegraph* about the government's intention to reform the civil service, nominates as 'Sir Humphreys' the members of the civil service that object to the reform and presumably insist the bigger the government, the better it is.<sup>5</sup> Directly referring to elements of the series in such a manner presupposes the audience's general knowledge of them. A quick search with the search engine Google on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2011 turned up the following number of results for the three main fictional characters of the series: James Hacker – 80 700, Sir Humphrey – 1 080 000, Bernard Woolley – 21 500. This gives compelling reason to believe the series is quite significant even today, an almost 30 years after its original airing.

## 2 Goals & research question

### 2.1 Research question

It may seem that any study of a politically oriented television show would be better suited to the field of Political Communication than International Relations. The material definitely can be classified as political communication, particularly if we use the well accepted model of Brian McNair where political communication is defined simply as any

“...purposeful communication about politics. This incorporates:

1. All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives.
2. Communication addressed *to* these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists.
3. Communication *about* these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorial and other forms of media discussion of politics.”<sup>6</sup>

There is no denying that a television series about the prime minister of the United Kingdom fits under the banner 'media discussion of politics', but what locates this thesis more readily in the field of International Relations than political communication is it's research question, or goal.

That goal, or the question this study hopes to address, is to find out the kind of world view is portrayed by the The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) sitcom *YPM*. While political communication emphasizes the actual act of communicating political ideas, this thesis is more concerned in investigating the creation of a view of reality, a world view. It would be impossible to draw any concrete lines as to where the purview of political communication ends and that of

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<sup>5</sup> *The Week* 24.6.2010.

<sup>6</sup> McNair 2007, p. 4.

International Relations begins for the border between them and most other social sciences is porous at best, making this thesis necessarily a multidisciplinary endeavour, at least from the point of view of these two fields.

There are three underlying assumptions that are made as a base for this thesis. The basic assumption of the thesis is that the behaviour, actions and discourse show some indication of the way the cast and crew see world order in international relations. At least, we should be able to conclude an idea of how they wish the rest of the world to perceive their world views. A direct quote from the Prime Minister (PM) in the standalone episode 'Party Games' illustrates this quite conclusively: "As far as world politics goes of course, the foreign office is just an irrelevance. We've no real power. We're just a sort of American missile base, that's all."<sup>7</sup>

The second assumption is that theories can group all of this together into a coherent view. It would be insufficient, or at least non-purposeful, to merely state and list all the views portrayed within the material. They would merely be unorganized independent statements without any significance. In order to find some form of connection between the views and place under the domain of International Relations I attempt to find which theory of International Relations best describes them. The arrived upon theory therefore brings "...order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible."<sup>8</sup> In other words, it functions as a reference framework through which the world can be intelligible, or metaphorically speaking, as spectacles or glasses.

The third assumption is that for a series to be successful with the general public it has to have some grounding in reality. That is to say the audience has to feel some form of association and understanding with the themes being tackled, parodied or converted to a satire. In a political sitcom, this means the series can be taken as at least partly representative of the views the audience has as well as the makers of the series. YPM can clearly be said to have been, and still be a very popular BBC series. To its popularity in the presents speaks the fact that it was voted in 2004 the 6<sup>th</sup> best British sitcom of all time.<sup>9</sup> In the past to the same purpose speak the 6 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards the series received.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, its precursor 'Yes, Minister', was the first sitcom to ever receive a BAFTA award 3 years in a row.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 31:29-31:38.

<sup>8</sup> Morgenthau 1978, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> BBC – Britain's best sitcom, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sitcom/winner.shtml>

<sup>10</sup> Awards Database – The BAFTA site, <http://www.bafta.org/awards-database.html?sq=yes%2C+prime+minister>

<sup>11</sup> Awards Database – The BAFTA site, <http://www.bafta.org/awards-database.html?sq=yes%2C+minister>

The period of airing the series correlates with the very end of the Cold War and is as such of immense interest to international relations students. This period marked a great change in the thinking of many scholars and changed the world's political landscape. The United Kingdom was a considerable European force as it was the closest ally of the United States of America. This gave its views on world affairs vast importance and it is worthwhile today to attempt to understand how these world affairs were seen and made intelligible to the general public, in other words, how they were portrayed in popular culture.

The greatest interest of this thesis is on finding out what is portrayed within the series itself and the point of least interest is what its producers intended. Some thought is given to the audience though, but not in a major manner. This means the supporting questions to analyse the material must deal with the series itself. These questions are much more extensive than the actual research question, but should all be answered for a fuller understanding of the material. Borrowing and reprising, mostly by replacing image by program, from lists comprised by Gillian Rose meant for the analysis of images we can list some of the major supporting questions as:

- ◆ what is being shown? what are the components of the **program**? how are they arranged?
- ◆ is it one of series?
- ◆ where is the viewer's eye drawn to in the image, and why?
- ◆ what is the vantage point of the image?
- ◆ what relationships are established between the components of the image visually?
- ◆ what use is made of colour?
- ◆ how has its technology affected the text? what is, or are, the genre(s) of the **program**? Is it documentary, soap opera, or melodrama, for example?
- ◆ to what extent does this **program** draw on the characteristics of its genre?
- ◆ does this **program** comment critically on the characteristics of its genre?
- ◆ what do the different components of an **program** signify?
- ◆ what knowledges are being deployed? whose knowledges are excluded from this representation?
- ◆ does this **program's** particular look at its subject disempower its subject?
- ◆ are the relations between the components of this **program** unstable?
- ◆ is this a contradictory **program**?

**Figure 1:** Background questions for the program. Emphasis indicates where the word 'image' has been replaced by 'program' in appropriate declinations.<sup>12</sup>

Many of these questions influence the choice of methodology and the ways with which they will be answered are elaborated upon in the section on methodology. They serve as a starting point for further analysis, leading to more questions and further investigation and their answers can be found throughout the thesis, not in one particular section or another.

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<sup>12</sup> Rose 2001, p. 189.

## **2.2 Prior similar research**

Similar research, dealing with the ways media can influence the audience has been conducted previously, but mostly in the fields of journalism and political communication. Despite this the connection between media and politics should come as no surprise to any student of political science or International Relations. It is hard to find anyone that still claims media doesn't influence our cultural models. "...[C]ultural models embed assumptions about what is 'appropriate,' 'typical,' and/or 'normal,'..."<sup>13</sup>. Define politics as you will, but such underlying assumptions tie in to almost every definition of it.

Brian McNair has written extensively concerning journalists' roles in shaping the political atmosphere and defining political reality. In his book "An Introduction to Political Communication" he states that journalists are the ones responsible for communicating to us the true meaning of politics.<sup>14</sup> His emphasis is however on the ways actual 'real' world politics can be influenced by the media and how 'real' world politicians can use the media precisely to this aim. Since this thesis is concerned with a fictional series, McNair's emphasis doesn't seem suited.

Thaïs Machado-Borges has written about the supposedly fictive Brazilian telenovelas and how they elaborate on recent events and the political environment of Brazil under the guise of claiming to be purely fictional. They reduce the politics of the nation to institutional politics and represent it as corrupt, complicated and gendered. While Thaïs' work tackles with the influence of the fictive on the politics of reality and demonstrates how fictive media can be used to deal with political issues, it is still a work that deals with how real world issues are portrayed and lead to using media in a particular manner. My thesis is more concerned with what media can tell us of the views people had or were subjected to at the time of their making.<sup>15</sup>

The research in the fields of political communication and journalism provide good examples on how journalistic material may be analysed to yield the views portrayed within them.<sup>16</sup> While there are studies that have sought to find how particular films or series attempt to influence public opinion one way or the other, these are one sided relations where the program has the potential power to change the observing society. A much more holistic approach is to admit that while the program may influence its audience, it is at the same time a result of said audience's perception of

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<sup>13</sup> Gee 1999, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> McNair 2007, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Machado-Borges 2007, p.163-168.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Palokangas, 2003.

reality. The program and the audience are in dialogue and finding out what that dialogue is, is what is of interest. That is the view taken within this thesis.

In their interesting book Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey Jones and Ethan Thompson explore – with the help of several contributing writers – the connections between satire, television and politics. The book looks at the alternative ways in which people get their political information these days, the extent of its credibility and factuality.<sup>17</sup> The book's examples are of different types of satirical series which are either intentionally and clearly derived from real world events and people or are produced often enough to readily react to the audience. Despite having correlations with real world events and people, YPM is not as reactive as the examples in the book with its episodes reacting to long term events and occurrences, not instantaneously.

While no considerably similar research was found to have been done in the field of International Relations, there are several theses that tackle with similar questions. Even in the University of Tampere at least one similar thesis has been written within the department of political science. Niina Vanhatalo wrote her thesis on how the United States television series 'Third Watch' shaped the national identity of the United States after 9/11.<sup>18</sup> She uses the theoretical framework of politicainment to situate her thesis in the field of political studies and discourse analysis as a method of analysis to analyse the material. Her material consisted of four episodes of the television series 'Third Watch' that deal with the bombing of the World Trade Center on 9/11.

This thesis bears great resemblance to Vanhatalo's in the way it is structured. Just as Vanhatalo does in her thesis, this one also, uses the theory of politicainment to justify why it is relevant in the field of political studies and discourse analysis as a method to analyse the material. It does however, differ significantly in both the type of material being analysed and the question being asked of that material. While Vanhatalo's thesis dealt with a drama series, this thesis analyses a political satire. Vanhatalo's research question was concerned with the construction of national identity, while this thesis attempts to find the world view portrayed in the material. In other words what does the series tell us? These are important differentiating facts, since Vanhatalo's thesis was written as a thesis of political science, not international relations. It is once again the formulating of the research question that places this thesis more under the purview of the field of international relations than political science or political communication.

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<sup>17</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Vanhatalo 2008.

## 2.3 *The significance of the era*

Since this thesis deals with world views in particular period of time, the time of airing of YPM, a brief summary of the significant events from years immediately prior and the actual years of airing is in order. Where historical connections can be drawn will be mentioned in the analysis itself as well. The background information given here on the era in question is meant to help identify with the audience watching the series at the moment of airing. The temporal era this thesis deals with the end of the Cold War, more specifically from January 1986 to and including January 1988, the years that the series was aired.<sup>19</sup> To state that the Cold War ended only with the collapse of the Soviet Union would be a gross simplification of facts. While the collapse may mark the final chapter of the Cold War, it was still the result of multiple forces at work that proved impossible to control.

The actual events that leading up to the actual collapse of the Soviet Union,<sup>20</sup> can be seen to begin from Jaruzelski's attempt to cut government subsidies in Poland in 1988.<sup>21</sup> This makes the period immediately prior to such dramatic changes one of great interest. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev had "...introduced new policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (economic and social reform)"<sup>22</sup> with an aim to reform the Soviet System into a functioning and viable one. This was a monumental task that that arouse the interest of the western nations but it is interesting to investigate if it was also apparent in the world views they held immediately after their implementation.

Despite the impending change, the period of airing of YPM was a tense one, especially between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States had Ronald Reagan as their president whose armament policy and military spending caused the United States to move from being the world's largest lender to the world's biggest borrower.<sup>23</sup> The main rival for the United States during the Cold War clearly raised suspicions even at the end of the end of the Cold War since approval for the Soviet Union in the United States was still at 25% of the population in a poll taken in 1987.<sup>24</sup> This tension surely resonated with the United States' greatest supporter Great Britain. After all, Western Europe's security had been tied to the United States for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the United States defining common enemies to the dominated European nations.<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that the

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<sup>19</sup> List of Yes Minister and Yes, Prime Minister episodes – Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Yes\\_Minister\\_and\\_Yes,\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_episodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yes_Minister_and_Yes,_Prime_Minister_episodes).

<sup>20</sup> Lowe 1997, pp. 207-208.

<sup>21</sup> The attempt sparked large scale protest strikes when food prices went up. Jaruzelski chose not to risk military intervention but opened talks with the opposition. This was the first time a Soviet leader had to back down when faced with the opposition of the masses and marked the first chapter in the final story of the Soviet Union.

<sup>22</sup> Lowe 1997, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> Apunen 1999, pp. 328-329.

<sup>24</sup> Harle 1991, p. 129.

<sup>25</sup> Harle 1991, pp. 175-176.

United States and Great Britain didn't have their differences either. In 1983 the United States responded to shifts in power within Grenada by controversially leading a military occupation of the island state, a commonwealth realm, leading to strong opposition by Great Britain, but no direct action.<sup>26</sup>

There were also tensions in other parts of the world during the same era giving it more significance. The Iraq-Iran war that lasted 8 years didn't end until August 1988. At the time of the first airing of YPM, the war had raged already for 6 years. The war was geographically distant from Great Britain, but its significance for the oil consuming economies was vast.<sup>27</sup>

Striking at issues closer to home so to say, the European Economic Community was ever increasing its integration. The Single European Act<sup>28</sup> was signed in Luxemburg on February the 17<sup>th</sup> 1986. Just a month after the first episode of YPM was aired. The negotiations for the treaty had already begun the previous year, so it may have some significance in British views toward the European Community. After all, the treaty did increase the powers of the European Parliament and some nations may have felt it was a threat to their sovereignty.<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the actual Prime Minister during the airing of YPM, summarized the major events of the period in her own words, both just before and during the airing, in the chronology of her memoirs. I shall only mention the ones that appear to some extent within the series. This is because the list of significant events between 1982 and 1988 is very extensive and mostly dealing with issues not addressed in the series. Even these are not directly mentioned in the series as such, but the episodes deal with very similar issues. Thatcher's list when superimposed with YPM gives the following real world events: War of the Falklands (1982), cabinet reshuffle (1983 & 1985), cruise missiles arrived at Greenham (1983), European Council meetings (1983 & 1985), attending the funerals of heads of state (1984 & 1985), PM's visit to Israel (1986), US raid on Libya (1986).<sup>30</sup>

## **2.4 Ontological standpoint**

I have already taken several viewpoints which indicate towards a specifically constructivist ontological perspective. The theme of the study, to investigate how the world is perceived, through

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<sup>26</sup> Waters 1986, pp. 229-230.

<sup>27</sup> Apunen 1999, p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> The first major amendment of the treaty to form the EEC. It was aimed at finally completing a single internal market for the EEC and in augmenting the powers of the EEC.

<sup>29</sup> The Single European Act,

[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/institutional\\_affairs/treaties/treaties\\_singleact\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/treaties_singleact_en.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Thatcher 1993, pp. 866-869.

‘theoretical glasses’, as opposed to how the world objectively is, is among the clearest. If we were to believe that the views of actors within international relations would be unable to influence its reality, then this study would merely serve as an image of the world as it is. By placing weight on the stance that views and ideas shape the world around us, at least because we can not make any observation of the world without subjecting it to interpretation, we understand that understanding those viewpoints is indeed a worthwhile effort.

I have taken the non-positivist stance that theories are not merely explanations of reality, explaining a world distinctly apart from theory, but rather ‘constitute’ as much a part of the explanation as they explain.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, the theories which the study attempts to identify will include positivist ones, for it is not my views being addressed, but the views being portrayed in the material. I take the stance that theories are not all equal in value when explaining reality, but that some theories have indeed a more accurate relationship to reality and facts than others and the less accurate theories will eventually be either amended or eliminated.<sup>32</sup> The same principle can be extended into the realm of fiction. Since I take the world of YPM to be the one of interest, it stands to reason that some theories of international relations will be better atoned to it than others. And since theories help us make sense of the world, the theory (once arrived at) will show the kind of world view portrayed in the world of YPM.

It is important to identify my stance on the meaning of theory before proceeding with the study, because there is no absolute ‘truth’ that will automatically be visible from any material without some subjective influence of the author, at least not in the social sciences.<sup>33</sup> Ontologically the theory that I found to best suit this thesis, politicotainment, takes several constructivist assumptions as its basis and therefore suits my choices very well. To claim that media both influences and is influenced by the audience is the clearest and is explained in the following chapter.

## **3 Theory**

### ***3.1 Politicotainment***

As has previously been stated, the basic thought behind this thesis is the thought that media functions as both a portrayer of the views the people hold at the time of production and also influences the audience in turn. Politicotainment lends itself as a useful theory to justify this claim. It bridges the gap between media and politics. It carries a dual meaning considering both the politics

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<sup>31</sup> Dunne et al. 2007, p.8-9.

<sup>32</sup> Haukkala 2008, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Karisto & Seppälä 2004, p. 85.

of entertainment and the entertainment of politics. The connection of entertainment and politics can be seen as being part of a much wider field ‘democrataintment’ that can be seen to claim that

“...commercial media as a whole, especially routine television entertainment formats like drama and comedy, perform a public function, representing-and teaching-aspects of contemporary citizenship to vast cross-demographic populations.”<sup>34</sup>

Hartley, the author of the above quotation, finds that the distinguishing feature between politicotainment and democrataintment is the type of media it refers to. Politicotainment refers to merely the political forms of media, such as satirical broadcasts, speeches, active participation in reality television, etc. whereas democrataintment takes into account other types as well, arguing that citizenship is profoundly mediated in the modern/postmodern period by having the public’s participation in politics (public decision making) be done mainly through various media outlets.<sup>35</sup> This is because politics and particularly foreign politics are so distanced from our everyday lives that our only connection to them is through information we obtain from various forms of media.

The growing gap between the voters and the actual politics of a realm is often used not only to explain, but also to justify the further politicizing of media. Particularly in democracies this gap has led to a perceived crisis of democracy, creating a demand for some way of involving the masses in political decision making. The result has been an ever increasing popularization of politics. The necessitated effect of this popularization attempt has been that politics has to be made entertaining, enthusing to the viewer. The natural criticism in turn has been that this leads to an oversimplification of serious political issues, a de facto ‘dumbing down’ of the facts. This criticism is not however supported by investigations into the amount and type of information audiences receive from popularized political programs in comparison to standard current affairs programs. Jeffrey P. Jones has for example shown that not only does the satiric program *The Daily Show* give the audience the same information a CNN report does it actually gave the audience more information.<sup>36</sup> This supports a claim that popularized politics in media can be significant and can in fact teach perform a societal teaching function.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Hartley’s definitions of politicotainment and democrataintment, neither term (politicotainment and democrataintment) has yet been formalized to a large extent, making the choice of one over another very dependent on the researchers investigating mediated politics themselves. I have chosen to treat YPM primarily as a political program taking politicotainment as a

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<sup>34</sup> Hartley 2007, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Hartley 1999, p. 157.

<sup>36</sup> Jones 2007, pp. 142.

<sup>37</sup> Cardo & Street 2007, pp. 109-110.

framework for this thesis, but I admit that it can easily be taken as a comedy more aptly justifying the use of democratainment. I see this differentiation however as quite artificial, since the basic argument is almost identical in both approaches. This argument can be summarized as: there is connection between media and politics. One reason I choose to use the term politicotainment and not democratainment is that democratainment carries allusions towards democracy already in its name and is thus skewed towards observing a certain form of entertainment, that which teaches democracy. I would hence argue against Hartley that democratainment can be considered a narrower term than politicotainment in as far as the type of relation between media and politics is concerned, if not from the point of view media types.

The quoted definition of democratainment above clearly lends validity to the fundamental base of this thesis that commercial media has an influence on its audience and society as a whole. From the point of view of politics, never has this teaching-aspect of entertainment been more apparent or widespread than with the rise of reality television, although politicotainment encompasses a much larger media field than merely television. We are taught the very basics of democracy when the entire audience is given the possibility of voting and influencing the outcome of the shows. Most of these shows are nation or culture specific, but there a few examples of international shows that work in a transnational arena and still involve the audience in the decision making procedure. Among the most noted is the Eurovision song contest with several million televotes being cast every year. The voting mechanics may themselves demonstrate political aspects such as national identities, old animosities, feelings of sympathy, or the current affairs surrounding the competition and serve as an abundant source for investigation. What remains clear is that commercial media does involve the audience and Hartley's claim of their educational role has validity, at least from the democratization point of view.<sup>38</sup>

Another form of democracy teaching that occurs is the publishing of ratings for different programs being broadcast. There is a feeling of influential power the audience has to influence the popularity of a series and thus the justification of an entire show, even though more often than not the ratings are calculated as a factor of a very small percentage of viewers. In other words an average viewer has still little to no power in actually influencing the ratings. Ratings are however used to justify the launch (evaluation from the screening), the continuation and the final cancellation of shows.<sup>39</sup>

While democratic teaching can be considered to be significant in many forms of television, it would be an oversimplification to state that it is the only type of teaching that occurs from media. Media's

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<sup>38</sup> Hartley 2007, pp. 54-55.

<sup>39</sup> Hartley 2007, p. 32.

portrayal of society can be as teaching of the society itself as of the democratic processes that abound within it, or lack thereof. Soap operas and their Hispanic equivalent telenovelas exaggerate and play out many of the events and dramas from their viewers' everyday lives. Through a claim to fiction, they are free to elaborate on the values and rules of society. At the same time they influence what the audience sees as good and proper and when the plots touch upon political matters, can influence the expectations viewers have towards politics and politicians.<sup>40</sup> The same can be thought to be the case with other forms of fiction that pretends to take place in a 'real world' setup of here and now, as opposed to some fairytale land or the distant future or past.

The fictional nature of the plot or the characters does not subtract from the appeal of the shows to the audiences, after all even reality television is not considered to be an accurate portrayal of reality by most of its viewers. The claim to authenticity in fiction is done through elaborate set designs that appear 'as real as possible'. In broadcasts this is done by using audio signals to produce images in the listener's mind, while in television an actual studio set may be built. This gives the audience the feeling of looking beyond what they normally would see of worlds that demonstrate power, intrigue and mystery, such as the world of politics, fashion and the rich and famous.<sup>41</sup>

When media however takes the stance that the characters it portrays may in fact be accurate representations of real individuals, the teaching aspect is one of exposing characteristics, but only in as far as the scriptwriters and producers want to show. There are clear ethical issues in portraying real people, especially from the past. One reason is that if some of the characters being portrayed are deceased, there is no-one to argue whether the portrayal is accurate or not. If the characters are still alive there is a tremendous risk of ruining their reputation by misleading the public or sometimes even by showing the truth. Of course it may be argued that public figures must accept a certain amount of loss of privacy as part of their jobs. Some programs still prefer to sidestep the discussion of ethics by leaving doubt so as to is the character being portrayed intended to be someone real, or fully fictitious. This is also the way in which YPM is set up. It is apparent that there are several parallels between Jim Hacker and Margaret Thatcher, but by making the lead character male in contrast to his female 'real' counterpart and comical in contrast to 'the iron lady' the viewers are left with a secure feeling that if what they are watching becomes too unacceptable, it can always be deemed fiction.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Machado-Borges 2007, pp. 163-165.

<sup>41</sup> Riegert 2007, p. 214-215.

<sup>42</sup> Ottosen 2007, pp. 238-240.

Simplifying the relationship between media and politics to one of teaching can provoke the view that it is one-sided, with the teacher functioning merely as a transmitter of information. Using the term teacher and teaching invokes the object of teaching, the student. This simplified view of one-sided transmission is not intended. Indeed, exploring the metaphor of the teacher-student relationship it can also be argued that no teacher is free from the influence of the students. All teachers were once students themselves and even in the role of the teacher they are subject to the questions and counterarguments of the students. The same is true of the relationship of media and politics. All media is formed in some political environment and calls forth a reaction from its audience. If the media in questions appears more than once, it may be influenced even significantly by this reaction as a mutual construction becomes apparent between the audience and the media.

But is there a difference in the type of media, fictional or non fictional, dramatic or comic, etc, and the political value it has? It may seem reasonable to argue that ‘serious’ and ‘quality’ journalism is such that it deals with broad social events, a generalized view of policy from a separate vantage point far above the everyday mundane plane we inhabit. By contrast ‘tabloid journalism’ or the popularizing of politics is often seen as trivializing politics and degrading the value of useful information that can be obtained from this media type. While this may be the case in some specific examples, it is far from contested as a general rule. In fact it has even been argued by scholars such as John Fiske and John Hartley that popular journalism is often more honest than its official counterpart. I will dwell more in-depth into why YPM cannot be considered without political value simply for its genre and type in the section on satires.<sup>43</sup>

Labelling politicotainment as a theory instead of a hypothesis makes assumptions as to its character and scope. In as far as its character is concerned it situates itself as a theory promoting understanding rather than explaining. While it allows for the explanation of several events, it does not allow for the prediction of occurrences or the formation of extensive causal links – as natural science aim at doing. It merely highlights the complex relationship between media and politics and accepts that in the context of society, individual differences can be very significant when it comes to interpreting media. From the point of view of scope it can clearly not be considered an attempt at a grand theory that covers all eventualities of human existence, such as is the attempt by theories like the English school theory of international relations. Politicotainment has to be seen a more specific theory that allows the investigation of the connections between politics and media. It is not however tied to any particular case or type of media, making it more flexible than a mere collection

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<sup>43</sup> McNair 2007, pp. 54-56.

of hypotheses. The basic assumptions it holds are applicable to a number of cases, but not all situations.<sup>44</sup>

Politicocontainment takes the role of a supporting theory to a constructivist core collection of more general ones, as opposed to being an attempt at a separate paradigm. In order to call it a theory, one must therefore forego Kuhnian views of the nature of theories in social sciences and preferably take a Lakatosian approach to it. Politicocontainment increases our knowledge of one aspect of politics that falls under the general embrace of a constructivism. It does not attempt to erode or question the basic assumptions of the basic core theorem, but creates an additional layer of specific knowledge that may one day be sufficiently accepted and formalized to form a part of that theorem itself. The youth of formal politicocontainment does mean this may be very far away however.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.2 Television**

Television presents a particular medium interest for these studies. It has spread quickly and efficiently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to occupy a role in the lives of most families' of the world, transmitting signals to us that require the use of two of our five physical senses and our common sense too. This rapid expansion has made television the "...major source of 'people-watching' [other people] for comparison and possible emulation"<sup>46</sup>. Unlike other media formats (with the possible exception of the internet), television crosses national and cultural borders with tremendous ease. It connects billions of cross-demographic viewers throughout the globe, emphasizing their differences and similarities, sometimes both even in the same program.

Amusingly television still maintains a very central role in the formation of politics, even though from the marketing point of view it has lost ground to new forms of media such as the internet. Why hasn't it been superseded by newer mediums? One reason might be that the broadcasting medium of television has the unique characteristic of being able to make a claim to the real. It delivers to us a relatively truth-like perception placing the viewer as an outside observer of the something being shown. Even though it leaves out of its reach our senses of smell, taste and tact, these are senses we would not be capable of using at a distance anyway. The fallacy of the claim to reality though is that it is impossible for even television to give an unfettered portrayal of reality. Every scene has choices involved in it by the producers, actors, stagehands, etc. Even the presence of a camera may affect the behaviour in a given situation. This impossibility to actually represent reality means that

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<sup>44</sup> Hollis & Smith 1992, pp. 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Haukkala 2008, pp. 37-42.

<sup>46</sup> Hartley 1999, p. 155.

“...much of the difference between the drama and documentary, between mediated ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, comes down to issues of modality.”<sup>47</sup>

I mentioned how media can be seen to perform a democratic teaching role, but both of the forms of teaching I mentioned are indirect in the sense that they influence the viewer without them knowing it for certain. Particularly television programs can be significantly more direct and get away with it. Reality television epitomizes many of the tenets of politicalainment. Voting is present, ratings and voting results are shown, sometimes before all the votes are even in and the shows frequently contain political characters as actors, or as specialist judges. It is especially the role of these judges that gives reality television a direct teaching power. The “expert” judges’ presence invokes authority but that authority is defined by the producers, not the public. Their role appears to be to judge and guide the candidates through the trials of a show, but their guidance is not only directed at the candidates, but also at the audience observing the judges influencing their view of the participants in the show and the issues being tackled.<sup>48</sup>

Another form that reality television uses as an indirect form of being political is one that is shared by quiz shows and any program with either tasks, or questions. In fact, we could go as far as saying that this form of political action is common to all programs in varying degrees, as every program involves some choices of what information is given to the audience and how it is presented. The setting up and choosing of questions and background stories can be seen as fundamentally influencing the response to be given to subsequent questions and also the image of the whole that the audience perceives. In the spirit of this thesis this is very aptly demonstrated in a quotation from an episode of YPM.<sup>49</sup>

**Transcript 1:** YPM – The Ministerial broadcast, 1986, 21.08-21.56.

- 1 HA Well Bernard, you know what happens. Nice young lady comes up to you. Obviously you want to create a good impression. You don't want to look a fool, do you?
- 2 BW No.
- 3 HA No. So she starts asking you some questions ... Mr. Woolley (2,0), are you worried about the number of young people without jobs?
- 4 BW Yes.
- 5 HA Are you worried about the rise in crime among teenagers?
- 6 BW Yes.
- 7 HA Do you think there's a lack of discipline in our comprehensive schools?
- 8 BW Yes.
- 9 HA Do you young people welcome some authority and leadership in their lives?
- 10 BW Yes.
- 11 HA Do you think they respond to a challenge?

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<sup>47</sup> Riegert 2007, p. 214.

<sup>48</sup> Cardo & Street 2007, pp. 116-117.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

- 12 BW Yes.  
 13 HA Would you be in favour of reintroducing national service?  
 14 BW Ye- (2,5) Oh, well I suppose I might.  
 15 HA Yes or no.  
 16 BW Yes.  
 17 HA Of course you would Bernard. After all you've told you can't say no to that. So, they don't mention the first five questions. They publish the last one.

In the above dialogue Sir Humphrey Appleby (HA<sup>50</sup>) demonstrates to Bernard Woolley (BW) how the questions asked by a surveyor influence the answer to the final question concerning their view on the reintroduction of national service into a positive stance. Almost immediately he demonstrates how an ulterior line of questioning can produce precisely the opposite answer from the same subject.

**Transcript 2:** YPM – The Ministerial broadcast, 1986, 22.07-22.25.

- 19 HA Mr. Woolley, are you worried about the danger of war?  
 20 BW Yes.  
 21 HA Are you worried about the growth of armaments?  
 22 BW Yes.  
 23 HA Do you think there's a danger in giving young people guns and teaching them how to kill?  
 24 BW Yes.  
 25 HA Do you think it's wrong to force people to take up arms against their will?  
 26 BW Yes.  
 27 HA Would you oppose the reintroduction of (1,0) national service?  
 28 BW Yes.

The dialogues demonstrate the power that the choice of questions and statements, not to mention repetition, can have on the final perception that the audience is left with. In the same way the judges of popular television shows can be used to invoke 'expert' opinions and guide the audience to make an informed voting decision, if voting is involved and to justify their decision if the audience has no vote.<sup>51</sup> In the same way the producers of a series can be seen to always influence the views of the audience by choosing what background information is given to them and how it is framed. The reach of television to two of our senses allows for greater influence since what is seen touches and hence influences the audience in a plethora of ways. While neither the producers nor judges have any direct power over how the audience will ultimately interpret their message, they can play crucial roles in shaping this interpretation. This direct or indirect use of power that television allows makes it highly politicized medium, especially if we accept the political realist assumption of a struggle for power being the central aspect of all politics.

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<sup>50</sup> Characters whose dialogues are transcribed will be marked by two letter abbreviations. These are presented in the first occurrence where they are transcribed and subsequently used in a systematic manner. E.g. Sir Humphrey Appleby is marked HA in all the transcriptions that follow as well as this one.

<sup>51</sup> Cardo & Street 2007, pp. 116-117.

### **3.3 Theory as a lens**

My idea is not merely to analyse the types of discourses present in the material but also to see if from those discourses something indicative of a world view can be found. As stated, my assumption is that our world views can be expressed more formally in the choice of theoretical frameworks through which we choose to study the world. There are several underlying ontological questions with each choice of theory that shape the way we approach that which is. These ontological differences can be irresolvable at the deepest level, since they ultimately come down to a personal choice concerning what to believe truly exists. Epistemologically there are further choices a person must make, but which are already partly funnelled towards a certain direction by the ontological choices. My goal is to see if the choices in YPM can be said to fit the choices of a specific theory of international relations. This shall be done in the conclusions of this thesis.

Identifying the ontological and epistemological choices inherent in a television series directly may be too much of a daunting task, since they will rarely be referred to directly, particularly in a series that does not exclusively deal with theoretical processes. A framework is needed to approach the matter of theories of international relations. It is necessary to attempt to single out those aspects which separate one theory from another and then find if the discourses conform any of the categories.

Alexander Wendt has summarized some of the basic arguments befalling the debate concerning theories of choice in International Relations. He has concluded that many of the arguments between theories can be compared on two levels: 1) whether the theory seems holist or individualist 2) whether the structures of human association are determined by shared ideas or material forces. In other words, the questions of interest in broadly finding the theoretical constraints of a theory are what difference structures make and what difference do ideas make. Does a structure itself determine the behaviour of the actors within it, or are choices more independently arrived at in a state of anarchy? Is reality and our possibility of acting within it determined primarily by brute material forces, to which power and interests can be counted, that are indistinguishable from one place to another or is reality a matter of interpretation or cultural definition, with a vast capacity for change? Placing the two levels on opposing axis, we can identify four distinct areas where theories can be located. Locating large theories such as Realism, Liberalism, Marxism and Constructivism within the axis, we come up with the following diagram:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Wendt 1999, pp. 29-32.

Holism	Marxism	Constructivism
Individualism	Realism	Liberalism
	Materialism	Idealism

**Figure 2:** Four ways to classify IR theories.<sup>53</sup>

Of course each section can be seen to encompass a wide variety of larger and smaller theories too and quite a few locate themselves between the extremes shown in the diagram above, but these can be investigated once the main uncompromising ontological and epistemological questions have been answered and the view being portrayed clearly placed somewhere within the axis presented above. Further separations can then be made if necessary. I say if necessary, because since the series in question, YPM, does not directly address the issue of theories it is probably of little use to try to pinpoint exactly what theoretical nuances can be identified from the material. After all, the main questions that determine the way we actually view the world can already be found by answering the aforementioned two questions. Further analysis into the theoretical lenses being opted for would give us no larger added value and would serve only a quenching of the thirst of curiosity.

Since this thesis is interested in the world view held in Great Britain, as it is portrayed in YPM, it is tempting to simply limit oneself to analysing the foreign affairs portrayed in the series, but this would be the same as equating states with the foreign affairs they practice. As a starting point, that is an assumption that cannot be made, for it limits the analysis too greatly. Instead, I take world view to indicate a potentially larger framework of actors and capabilities. The series itself will show if states are portrayed as the only significant actors in the international system, or do institutions and organizations have roles too. Tentative analysis of the material shows that at least states are considered actors within it, but what forms the state is another question all together. Domestic policies can influence both in theory and in practice the actions of a state and, at least in the general population's view, the type of individuals that govern the state reflect upon the decisions taken by

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<sup>53</sup> Wendt 1999, p. 32.

the state. Even issues of great significance from an IR point of view, such as the governing individuals' views on security, are "...not derived from 'objective' factors, but are a function of individual beliefs and predispositions"<sup>54</sup>. It is therefore worth while to dedicate some investigation as to what kind of leaders the series shows Great Britain as having.

## **4 Method**

### **4.1 Discourse analysis**

#### **4.1.1 Defining discourse analysis**

An appropriate method for analysing the meanings portrayed by a video series is discourse analysis, for it is through discourses that we make our thoughts tangible and subject them to analysis.<sup>55</sup> While the method has traditionally been used to analyse purely textual material, its usefulness is not limited to only them. To grasp the full potential of discourse analysis, texts have to be understood as anything that creates or portrays a discourse, in other words transmits a message that we interpret in subjective ways. These can be literary texts, audio recordings, public speeches or even a television series.

Though what is said will be the main focus of this thesis neither, the visual nor the audible aspects of the material will go without notice. Having the possibility of taking into consideration the full spectrum in signals, it would be unwise to dismiss any of the ones available. Despite the larger array of signals transmitted by film, it is still only an audio-visual medium, an attempt to represent a three-dimensional and multi-sensory world in a two-dimensional and two-sense frame.<sup>56</sup> That being said, it can not simply be broken down into three separate semiotic channels (text, audio and visual) either, because the meaning inherent in any film is product of the composite of all the three., thus making any decent attempt to analyse film necessarily a multimodal endeavour.<sup>57</sup> I will demonstrate how all three are connected in the following explanations of discourse (constituting mainly the textual analysis part), the visual and the auditory elements.

Discourse analysis conforms to my ontological standpoint that the world is fundamentally a constructed one, where the language we use organizes, builds, modifies and changes our prevailing

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<sup>54</sup> Vasquez 2009, p. 218.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault 1969, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> O'Halloran 2004, p. 109.

<sup>57</sup> Baldry 2004, p. 87.

social reality.<sup>58</sup> Discourses are not merely a way of connecting ‘reality’ with language, but rather they form that reality through intricate rules and practices of ordering concepts.<sup>59</sup>

Defining a discourse is a difficult endeavour, not in the least because discourse analysis doesn’t form any independent and coherent methodology, but is more of collection of useful tools and apparatus for analysing the importance of communication, with separate analysis’ having completely different points of emphasis. For the purposes of this thesis, it is worth while to note that discourse is closely tied with semiotics in that an important part of it is the understanding that the objects of any discourse are only given meaning by our reference to them. This means we form signs of separate concepts, which are constituted by a signified and signifier.<sup>60</sup> These signs can only obtain their meaning through other signs. Such a system of signs forms a code through which specific meanings are attributed.<sup>61</sup> This can be a language, but doesn’t need to be. Cultural habits or specific connotations that images obtain could also form a system of signs, or part of one. In effect anything that we use to make sense of something else. I am writing my thesis in English, despite being a Finn. Being able to understand the nuances inbuilt into the linguistic code adopted in the material shouldn’t be an issue though, since I am tri-lingual, with English being at present my strongest language and the one that I have the most schooling in. It may even be an advantage considering that the material and most of the literature is in English and using the same language for the thesis deducts from the chance of meaning being ‘lost in translation’.

The difference discourse analysis has with semiotics is that while in semiotics the actual signs and what they tell about the material are of highest interest, in discourse analysis the emphasis is on the separate discourses, formed by the signs.<sup>62</sup> Discourse analysis allows approaching language as a whole, not merely the linguistic side or the signs therein. It situates language in a much larger context of society, thought and experience. This is to say that it takes communication to be inherent to our human nature and all our deeds and ideas achieve meaning only through the act of communication. Thus language in the wider sense and society are inextricable.<sup>63</sup> This relationship between the viewing world and the one of the story is what discourse analysis is at its core concerned with.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jokinen, 1993, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Foucault 1969, pp. 53-54.

<sup>60</sup> Chandler, 2007, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> Jokinen, 1993, pp. 19-20.

<sup>62</sup> Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 7.3.6.1.

<sup>63</sup> Matheson, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Matheson, 2005, p. 91.

If an attempt at defining discourses should be made Foucault is usually referenced. Despite producing a plethora of overlapping and even contradicting theories on discourses, his work still serves as a basis for discourse analysts. Foucault saw discourse analysis as being the domain of any and all statements. Statements here, being taken again as not merely verbal or textual ones, but any form of communication with a purpose. Norman Fairclough has used Foucault's views in describing discourses in a very elegant and easily understandable way. They are in his words "...ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts feelings, belief and so forth, and the social world."<sup>65</sup> In other words, discourses form the abstraction of the rules and ideas that are being transmitted. 'A discourse' becomes a title encompassing all the groups of statements or acts that structure our way of thinking of a thing and how we act upon that thought, in other words how we give meaning to something.<sup>66</sup> Just as 'increased mobility' represents any object, rule or thought that allows us to move more freely and any reference to them can be fit under the discourse of 'increased mobility'. Ultimately the naming of the discourses is an arbitrary function made by the analyst. The importance is not in the name of the discourse, but in the connections the separate statements that constitute it demonstrate.

If a discourse is to be a way of representing something it must have some level of repetition implied within it. Discourses have to be abstracted from the statements or else they would simply be the separate statements as they are. There are various levels of abstraction from the above mentioned example of 'increased mobility' in the relatively low level to a very high level of abstraction such as 'idealist' discourse. But the level of abstraction sought should arise from material being analysed itself. There is a certain level of decision from the analyst involved in choosing the level of abstraction, since in all cases any discourse can be seen as being constituted from other discourses of a more specific and localized level. A good guideline to follow is to consider discourses as based on the dialectal relationship between themselves and any aspect of social life. In other words, they locate themselves at the level of abstraction where they can form nodal points between statements and other elements of social life.<sup>67</sup>

A single discourse would barely suffice to give us sufficient understanding of the world to make sense of it. Various discourses are hence tied together to form a sort of imaginary discourse map, or grid if you will. Discourses represent unique points in our map of understanding, with lines criss-crossing from one to another, from society to the world, to history and the individual. Since the

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<sup>65</sup> Fairclough 2004, p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> Rose 2001, p.136.

<sup>67</sup> Fairclough 2004, pp. 124-126.

collection of separate, yet connected discourses forms the limit of understanding, it is that collection of points that discourse analysis attempts to find.<sup>68</sup>

A further element of discourse analysis is the idea that all discourses are tied to a specific context in time, culture, interaction and sentence. They are subject to change whenever they are repeated and re-evaluated. Apart from being linked to the specific situations that provoked and followed the discourse to begin with, it is also linked to the statements preceding and following it.<sup>69</sup> Understanding the context in which the discourse was given is a key element of analysing the material and can give new insights into the interpretations drawn from it.<sup>70</sup>

Due to the importance of context, to correctly interpret merely the language through a precise and meticulous analysis of the words being said is insufficient to obtain a thorough understanding of the discourse. One must also aim at understanding how everything else that is involved in the discourse formulates it, the clothes, the body-language, the symbols, the tools, the attitudes, etc.<sup>71</sup> Even the language being conforms to some specific social language from a variety of them within the formal language. Different social languages can change the meaning of the words and phrases quite significantly from one to another. This simply means that people use different forms of language in different occasions, often without knowing it. From a purely linguistic point of view though, the same idea can change dramatically in meaning when said in different social languages, yet everyone involved in the communication may have interpreted it correctly.<sup>72</sup> Frustrating as it may seem, a fully accurate description of any discourse that would stand up to repeated testing for all eternity seems a logical impossibility.<sup>73</sup> After all, even the act of doing discourse analysis, arguing about power, truth and meaning means taking part in the formation of discourses.<sup>74</sup> The normal task for discourse analysts is therefore is to learn as much as we can “...about what producers and interpreters [of the discourse] think, believe, value, and share, and how they are situated materially, interactionally, socially, institutionally, culturally, and historically...”<sup>75</sup>. This would eventually lead to a situation where “[t]he answers cease to change because we have reached the limits of what

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<sup>68</sup> Gee 1999, p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> Foucault 1969, p. 31.

<sup>70</sup> Jokinen, 1993, pp. 29-36.

<sup>71</sup> Gee 1999, p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Gee 1999, p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> One may ask though, if this is not true of all scientific endeavours including theories as they are regularly replaced by newer and more fitting theories to the understanding of the present (see e.g. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*).

<sup>74</sup> Rose 2001, p. 160.

<sup>75</sup> Gee 1999, p. 63.

contextual information was relevant to the producers and interpreters of the utterance or to our research interests”<sup>76</sup>.

The linkage to specific context justifies that some time be dedicated to recapping the historical situation and perceived reality that Great Britain found its self in during the end of the 1980’s as was done in the previous chapter. To avoid excessive hindsight bias, the sources to verify the validity of historic claims and attitudes were chosen from a time period close to the one being analyzed when possible. The importance of the historical context for this thesis is not however of vital importance for this thesis. Knowledge of the situation or its background can be of great importance especially when analysing narratives in order to bring the narrators out of abstraction and into a temporal context.<sup>77</sup> But since this thesis is not interested in placing the writers or the producers of YPM (in other words the narrators) in any context, but instead is more interested in the actual narration and the discourses therein, then this step becomes a second priority. This will be clearer after going through the different forms of emphasis (or types) of discourse analysis that exist.

#### **4.1.2 Particularities of film: Visual**

While discourse analysis is mostly used to analyze purely textual content, film also has a strong visual element present. Being aware of the meaning attributed to different visual elements in film allows us to approach the true intentions of the discourse being transmitted. Particularly in Western cultures, we tend to emphasize the significance of the visual over the textual when both are present. This is unlikely to change as visual stimuli is become evermore abundant and research into the effects of visual messaging is constantly growing. Visual elements are not randomly chosen and used, but have particular meanings they intend to portray. The meanings are of course tied to the cultural and historical context or code of the interpreter, but from that context, they have rules and conventions that are applied. It has a form of ‘grammar’ that constitutes these rules. Even though both texts and images have rules, they can not always be used to transmit the same messages. People make sense differently of words than they do of images and one can transmit messages the other cannot.<sup>78</sup>

Most visual analysis relies on semiotic tools and terms, but that is not to say discourse analysis cannot take advantage of these. The need to use more than one methodology becomes ever more

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 7.3.6.4.

<sup>78</sup> Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 2-3.

apparent as the material being analysed becomes more complex and as more and more questions are asked from it.<sup>79</sup> Surely a material encompassing three modes of transmission merits the use various mutually supporting methods. Analyzing images, or in this case moving images, has to begin by an understanding of visual grammar. First however, we must identify that in a television series there are two types of participants, represented ones – the characters and actors within the show – and interactive ones – the audience or viewers. The distinction is of importance, since different actions and settings can be directed at different participants. Also, the choice of addressing the interactive participant even indirectly can greatly influence the interpretation and emphasis of a scene. For the sake of popular convention and readability I will use the terms viewer and audience to refer to the interactive participant and the terms actor, protagonist or participant to refer to the represented participants.<sup>80</sup>

One aspect of visual grammar is how the participants and processes are represented. Here the participants can be considered to be the actors, or objects of significance within the image.<sup>81</sup> For example the choice of clothing the actors wear can portray meanings about the actor's character and mood through the style and colour. The choice of wardrobe may also be significant in its variance and stability. If the character changes their wardrobe frequently it sends the message of a dynamic character, or a change in mood whereas continuously wearing the same style of clothing indicates a fixed character and stable setting.<sup>82</sup>

The processes in turn are the actions or feelings these participants either take or are influenced by. Taking into consideration the actions is of particular significance, since it differentiates the analysis of a television series from that of static images.<sup>83</sup> Processes can be demonstrated using vectors that indicate movement of limbs or bodies, the transmitting of thoughts or the transmitting of feelings through vectors from their gazes. These can tell a lot about the intended meaning within the scene. For example the act of zooming in implicates a vector from the viewer towards the participant being zoomed in upon. The importance of the participant and all processes taken place upon them at that moment is magnified along with the image. There is a process of identification being made by the viewer.<sup>84</sup> "Eye-line vectors determine a Reacter (who does the looking) and a Phenomenon (the person [, action or thing]) looked at."<sup>85</sup> The vectors can result in transactional and non-transactional structures. Transactional structures result when two participants are connected by a vector. The

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<sup>79</sup> Rose 2001, p. 202.

<sup>80</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 176.

<sup>81</sup> Matheson 2005, pp. 110-112.

<sup>82</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 175.

<sup>83</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 175.

<sup>84</sup> Matheson 2005, pp. 110-112.

<sup>85</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 176.

action here has clear goal or target. Alternatively the non-transactional structures indicate a vector without a goal or target.<sup>86</sup> Transactional structures can be seen to move the story forward, while non-transactional structures deepen the meaning of a particular scene.

Another aspect of visual grammar is the modality of the image. In linguistics modality refers to the speaker's intention or attitude (possibly, definitely, might, etc...) and is usually referenced at a scale from high modality as something certain ('I will do') to low modality ('I am considering'). In visual media the level of modality is seen from the choice of camerawork and setting. Low modality is used to separate something as far from reality as possible by abstracting things in the image. Take for example a scene from the film *the Matrix* where the main character is standing in a white space in perfect makeup. In this space we accept anything is possible and our attention is drawn to the character – the only object present. We forgo any reality checks we may normally use to criticize the film while at this low modality. On the opposite side of the spectrum are choices that bring visual media to high modality. In these the viewer is constantly reminded that there is a camera present in the scene and our reaction is directed to dealing with the notion of witnessing something real. A good example would be a news report, where the choice of colours, editing, sounds and shaky camerawork all work to emphasize the reality of what is being portrayed.<sup>87</sup>

The importance of the visual aspect cannot be underestimated. It has become apparent in the age of reality television that the images are just as important, if not even more important than the message being transmitted verbally or textually. The importance of the camera as something that makes and validates reality is constantly growing. People are beginning to find more significance in the clearly fake constructs portrayed in a glossy, clean form through television than in the actual items and people behind them. Reality television has made this apparent, but surely the visual has been significant also before its advent. It is conceivable that people always have slight difficulty in accepting something they see as fully false and fictional and that filmmakers take advantage of this. After all, filmmakers have always manipulated television material either through editing, shooting decisions or other filming techniques.<sup>88</sup>

The final distinction concerning how films or series communicate their meaning to us for the purposes of this thesis shall be the one between showing and telling, the first being a presentation of events in a dramatic and acted form. The second – telling – would be presenting through the words

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<sup>86</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 175-176.

<sup>87</sup> Matheson 2005, pp. 112-113.

<sup>88</sup> Matheson 2005, pp. 103-105.

of a narrator.<sup>89</sup> YPM has no narrator as such in any of its episodes, but in several parts the events are explained by one character to another, or pondered upon out loud analogously with a conventional narrator. This makes it relevant to refer to the difference between showing and telling, for it might prove to have significance further in the analysis. After all, in these parts specific emphasis is placed to explain the events to the viewer making them immediately of higher significance.

Taking all the aspects of visual grammar and the distinctions that can be made into consideration, we are left with a decision as to when to describe the visual aspects and when not to in the analysis. To describe every possible visual characteristic from the scenes would be an inhuman task, for (to quote an archaic saying) if a single picture tells the tale of a thousand words, then how many words would be needed to describe a 40 minute series with 24 frames (pictures) per second? The solution is simply to consider the details of the visual that are relevant to the discourse. “Such judgments of relevance (what goes into a transcript and what does not) are ultimately theoretical judgements that are based on the analyst’s theories of how language, situations, and interactions work in general and in the specific situation being analyzed”<sup>90</sup>.

### **4.1.3 Particularities of film: Audio**

While the visual and linguistic aspects of discourse are significant, it would still be insufficient to claim that an analysis of film is merely of combination of visual and textual codes. This would be the case if we analysed a printed magazine or saw the entire film muted. When dealing with a television series, we must remember that it is not merely visual media, but audio-visual. The way the sounds are produced carries distinct meaning. It is both codified and constructed to transmit particular meanings to the audience.<sup>91</sup>

There are a number of choices that are made concerning sound that influence the overall message being transmitted. The positioning of microphones, the editing, use of simulated or natural sounds, background music and in the case of a sitcom, the adding of laughter to guide the audience into noticing that a scene of particular amusement has just passed or is in the process of passing. All these decisions influence the mood a scene and may cause the message to change meaning from the one a merely textual interpretation would give.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Piazza 2010, p. 176.

<sup>90</sup> Gee 1999, p. 97.

<sup>91</sup> Chandler 2007, p. 170.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

The most noticeable feature of sounds is of course the speech of the characters themselves. The tone, speed and variance of voice all contribute to give particular meanings to otherwise identical phrases. From a textual source it is often not clear if a character is truly amazed by something or deliberately belittling his conversational partner. The way characters converse with others can also give indications of the power relationship or authority between the character speaking and their conversational partner. While this is apparent to a certain extent from a purely linguistic analysis of the conversation, the form of speech can serve to augment or diminish the perceived power relationship. Characters may also and often do change their conversational conventions depending on the audience they are addressing. Thus no form of conversation can be taken as clearly indicative of a character's authority per se, but has to always be reflected on the authority of the other parties to the conversation. Audio-visual media has the advantage of giving the analyst at least a better chance to grasp the full meaning of the discourse.

Many of the same divisions to high modality and low as in linguistics can be expressed through audible means such as in the tone of voice of the characters. While the content of the communication may give cause to assume high modality or certainty, the tone may indicate quite the opposite. This forms a paradox between what is said and how it is said and may influence the discourse accordingly. Modality can also be deduced from the level of background or added sounds within a scene. If there are no background sounds whatsoever, a lower level of modality is implied than when for example the sound of a car's engine is heard over the conversation.<sup>93</sup>

Sound can also be used in less obvious manners by the use of background or ambient sounds. A clear change in background noise or its elimination completely combined with a transition can bring emphasis to the change of scene, or a transition to a new theme.<sup>94</sup> In the same way as was mentioned with the visual, stripping away the background sounds brings the characters and the dialogue into clear focus. This is how interviews are often conducted in studio setups. The mere lack of background sound is not sufficient to make us forgo all reality checks, as happens with low modality visuals. Unless it is combined with low modality visuals, a lack of ambient sound can have the effect of creating tension and anxiety in the viewer as they identify the abnormal nature of the situation. Having background sounds present on the other hand can serve to hide the visual editing of the scenes by having the same background sound transcend different visuals (cutting between shots).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Matheson 2005, p. 113.

<sup>94</sup> Baldry 2004, p. 95.

<sup>95</sup> Chandler 2007, p. 170.

A particular feature of the audio in sitcoms like YPM is the use of the laughter of an invisible audience. This marks the culmination of a phase of humorous phase. One scene can contain several of these phases, but the phases each contain some distinct features that allow for their separation from the others. Considering what was said about the modality of images, this ‘invisible’ laughter also serves to bring the scene to low modality, as it clearly reminds the viewer that they are present as observers and what is being observed is separable from reality. The viewer is thus distanced from the reality of the show.

As with the visual, it would be pointless to describe all modalities and sound effects of the separate phrases being said in the series. Since the modality of the audible becomes of interest to discourse analysis only when it influences the discourse itself, these are the cases that shall be described in the analysis. In other words, if the discourse is not influenced by the audible other than to reinforce the same discourse the textual (spoken) part is creating, then it shall go without mention.

#### 4.1.4 Different emphasis

To expand on the metaphor of discourse analysis as a collection of useful tools and apparatus that was mentioned earlier, these tools can have quite different uses and not all can be used for the same jobs. Discourse analysis has expanded into a wide variety of fields and forms that each contains a number of decisions made on the part of the analyst as to what he or she wishes to emphasize in their research. One way of exemplifying these decisions is through a listing of 4 opposing decisive pairs and locating the research between these.<sup>96</sup> Arja Jokinen has written extensively on discourse analysis in Finland and she, with Kirsi Juhila, define these four dyads as (my own translation):

Situational	-----	Culturally continuous
Meaning	-----	Formation of meaning
Rhetorical	-----	Responsive
Critical	-----	Analytic

**Figure 3:** A map of discourse analytic research.<sup>97</sup>

These pairs do not form dichotomies, so any research may situate itself at either extreme, or somewhere in between. I have already made several implicit claims about this thesis that indicate specific decisions as towards what particular points of emphasis this thesis takes. I will now both shortly explain the different decisive pairs in the above figure and situate this thesis within that frame.

<sup>96</sup> In actual practice all discourse analytical research contains elements from all of the pairs and may even fluctuate within the research between points of emphasis. A simplified view is presented here merely to show the existence of such points of emphasis.

<sup>97</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, p. 55.

The first pair is a decision on whether the research is more interested in the particular significance that arises in each particular situation or should this be tied to a larger cultural framework. It should be clear from the previous definition of discourse analysis that no situation is in itself unbound from cultural frameworks, but the researcher may choose to delegate these to a secondary role and emphasize the specifics arising from a deep analysis of the material at hand. In research emphasizing the situational the material being analyzed is usually less extensive than in the alternative, but the analysis of this is more detailed.<sup>98</sup>

I have pointed out before that this thesis is more concerned with what the material shows as being the world view in the UK according to the series YPM, than with placing said world view in larger historical and cultural framework. To that extent the historical situation is only referenced shortly in chapter 2 of this thesis and the bulk of the effort is in interpreting the series itself. In this sense this thesis is very close to the situational pole of the situational-culturally continuous pair (Situational |x-----| Culturally continuous).

The second pair involves defining if the research is concerned with how meaning is formed in the discourse, or alternatively with what meaning arises from it. The decision can be simplified as being between how and what questions. In other words, in research emphasizing the formation of meaning the researcher is interested in finding out what are the ways in which the discourses construct meaning and how these aspects are themselves constructed. Research emphasizing meaning on the other hand is more interested in the actual meaning being constructed. Meanings cannot fully be differentiated from the way in which they are formed and all discourse analysis must provide at least some analysis of both poles of the dyad. Concepts such as accounts, narratives, sign systems, interpretive repertoires, discourses, frameworks, etc. may help in specifying the ways in which the texts being analysed create meaning by placing it within a structure.<sup>99</sup>

Often the decision between meaning and its formation is done at the point of defining a research question.<sup>100</sup> This is also the case in this thesis, where the world view arising from the material creates a strong emphasis on the meaning there within, but the form of analysis and choice of material make it necessary to take some note of the ways in which such meaning is created. This is made clearer in the following chapters where the influence of semiotics on the methodology being applied is specified and the series itself situated into the framework of a narrative. The thesis

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<sup>98</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, pp. 56-57.

<sup>99</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, pp. 66-70.

<sup>100</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, p. 70.

therefore locates itself halfway from the centre to the meaning-pole of the meaning - formation of meaning decisive pair (Meaning |---x-----| Formation of meaning).

The third pair is one that emphasizes the previously stated fact that no meaning is separate from the ways in which it is produced. Both poles of the rhetorical – responsive dyad deal with the how questions of creating meaning. At the rhetorical pole, the emphasis is on the purposeful creation of meaning by attempting to create as convincing and complete discourses as possible. Rhetorical research aims at identifying what makes the discourses convincing. Simplifying it can be said that a rhetorical emphasis concentrates on the meaning being given. The other pole of the dyad is the responsive. At this pole the emphasis is on the interactions of different discourses and actors. This can be between interviewer and interviewee, a show and its public, a politician and their rival, etc. The underlying factor is that responsive research is interested in examining how the act of discursive interaction, usually between people, works to create meaning and not so much on what original meaning was intended. Due to the nature of the dyad, some forms of material are more readily researched with a rhetorical emphasis than others. For example newspaper articles, official statements and documentaries. On the other hand court manuscripts and interviews lend themselves to responsive analysis with greater ease. The decision of what emphasis to use is still ultimately the analyst's as the type of material only facilitates the use of rhetorical or responsive analysis.<sup>101</sup>

The general form of this thesis' material makes the placement of the thesis within the spectrum of this dyad interesting and in no way simple to define. As I have already stated in the background and prior research chapters, and will further show later on, the material is a satire. Political satire, particularly when presented in television, "...not only offers meaningful political critiques but also encourages viewers to play with politics, to examine it, test it and question it rather than simply consume it as information or 'truth' from authoritative sources."<sup>102</sup> This view would clearly place the emphasis at the responsive pole of the dyad. However, the material is not the type of political satire referred to in the above quotation, where the satirical element is taken from current affairs and brought to the audience within a relatively short time from the facts occurrence. YPM does have elements that can be identified from a review of the history of the United Kingdom as will be shown in the relevant parts of the analysis, but the time between these events and the series' airing is too long to make the series a meaningful part of the discourses that interpret the meaning of such events through interactions. Also, the fact that the series is pre-scripted and not particularly reactive to the discussions arising there from places the emphasis of this particular thesis in the pole of the rhetorical. YPM is well suited to rhetorical analysis, since the interpretations and meanings are in

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<sup>101</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, pp. 77-78.

<sup>102</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, p. 11.

reality transmitted without waiting for a response from the audience. The specific ways in which the discourses of satire can be approached will be described further on in the thesis. Of course there is always some form of response, if nothing else in ratings, but I will concentrate on the meanings being transmitted by the series, thus placing this thesis clearly within the sphere of rhetorical analysis (Rhetorical |x-----| Responsive).

The final dyad between critical and analytical discourse analysis is one that addresses the audience of the research. It is a choice concerning whom the research is directed toward and what its goals are. At one extreme there is the critical approach, which has been labelled by many as being even openly political, since this type of emphasis presupposes underlying subversive practices to be contained in the material and by exposing their presence within the language seeks to emancipate the audience from their effect. By seeking to influence the distribution of social goods, in this case the prevailing power division, this claim of a political activity is well justified where a critical approach is taken.<sup>103</sup> The analytical pole is much more material based. The researcher makes no assumptions of subversive practices and simply approaches the material as is. If such practices can be shown to be present, they will be made clear as a consequence of the analysis. To simplify one could claim that the main goal of the analytical approach is to conceptualize reality as fully as possible, whereas the critical approach aims at creating a new exchange or discourse that can change the existing social reality.<sup>104</sup>

I agree that all television series contain and reaffirm some form or another of division of social goods. After all, discourses are powerful in that they define our senses of self, places, objects, relations and the world in general. While many competing discourses exist simultaneously in any given society, sometimes questioning and even contradicting each other, certain discourses tend to become nonetheless dominant.<sup>105</sup> I further agree that emancipation of these is important, but I do not assume any specific ones to exist within YPM. The already stated position I have taken is to allow my analysis to flow from what can be found in the material and not set any preconditions towards what the thesis should accomplish.<sup>106</sup> The goal I have set of finding out what world view is presented within the material, without judging it one way or the other situates this thesis at the analytical pole of the final dyad (Critical |-----x| Analytic).

To summarise, this thesis aims at being as material based as possible.

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<sup>103</sup> Gee 1999, p. 79.

<sup>104</sup> Jokinen, Juhila 1999, pp. 85-87.

<sup>105</sup> Rose 2001, pp. 137-138.

<sup>106</sup> That is to say, other than allow for me to graduate from university.

Situational	x-----	Culturally continuous
Meaning	--x-----	Formation of meaning
Rhetorical	x-----	Responsive
Critical	-----x	Analytic

**Figure 4:** A discourse analytic map of this thesis

These methodological decisions on emphasis shall be the starting point for the analysis in this thesis. I bear in mind however that the emphasis may fluctuate during the analysis and where such fluctuation is noticeable I will strive to make it clear.

## **4.2 Analysing a political satire**

### **4.2.1 Stories as narratives**

The material takes the form of a political satire which has some important implications for its further analysis. In order to correctly interpret the discourses in the material it is necessary to understand the conventions that satires generally follow. This will place the material within a structure, as mentioned previously when describing the dyad of meaning – formation of meaning.

Firstly I make the simple claim that the material is in the form of a story. Another and more descriptive form of referring to a story is as an emplotted narrative. Indeed it contains both a narrative and a plot. Two plots to be precise. For most of us a plot refers to a summary of the main occurrences in the story, a thin red line that grabs and holds our attention from beginning to end tying matters together. However, from a methodological point of view a plot refers to a narrative type.<sup>107</sup> I will explain this shortly, now simply giving a description of the traditional interpretation of the plot in the material. The main plot can be seen as the main character’s struggle for power and how to maintain it. This plot transcends every episode with the main character constantly facing new challenges. The subplots that are present represent the individual episodes, which each may be viewed relatively easily as standalone ones. I will describe the plots in more detail in the analysis part, for now suffice it to state that the material clearly has a plot(s) in the traditional sense.<sup>108</sup>

Since stories are emplotted narratives and I claim the material is a story, the material must firstly pass the test of being a narrative. This is a simple enough to agree upon if we take the often quoted definition of the famous French semiologist Roland Barthes:

“The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and

<sup>107</sup> Ringmar 2006, p. 404.

<sup>108</sup> Czarniawska, 2004, pp. 17-20.

the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself."<sup>109</sup>

All stories in media demonstrate three sequential traits that are repeated over and over in the whole story. These are the setting of the scene, a sequence of actions and an evaluative comment that interrupts the action. The organization and sequentiality of events leads to the understanding of causality in a narrative. The reader or audience knows that separate events or actions, in other words fragments of the narrative, will make the most sense if explained by the links and causal relations of the rest of the story, much in the same way as the complex relationships between discourses should be mapped in order to understand the whole. It is precisely because of the emphasis on the links of separate elements into larger wholes that makes approaching the material through a combination of discourse analysis and narrative theory instead of for example word analysis, a more fruitful endeavour for this thesis.<sup>110</sup>

Narratives in are present everywhere and any form, or material of communicating ideas becomes a narrative if it is coherent. This identifying the material as a story is important because it means the separate signs and discourses found in the material must be reflected upon in relation to the whole story, not merely as standalone statements. Cinema films attempt to be coherent wholes by reiterating already given narratives and thus giving the audience the pleasure and security of recognizing fundamental character types and plots. For this to be achieved they have to be coherent, which is to say their creators have strived for coherence. This may also be political act, since often the way the imaginary world is made coherent involves strong thoughts and ideas about how the real world should be coherent. This is also a further argument for the political nature of media.<sup>111</sup>

The same attempt at coherence that applies for cinema film is also applicable to television series, like the sitcom being analyzed, but to a lesser extent. Due to the nature of television, the way it is always on offer, but only occasionally viewed and even then without the full attention, television programs do not exhibit the same coherence throughout as films do. The series often go on for so long that there is no clear final ending in sight. This is the case very often with soap operas, where separate plotlines are crisscrossed and combined without end. We could certainly take separate episodes as individual and self-contained, but that would defeat the purpose of investigating an

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<sup>109</sup> Czarniawska, p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Matheson, 2005, pp. 83-84.

<sup>111</sup> Matheson, 2005, pp. 84-86.

entire series, since we would be claiming the series itself has no plot and indeed making a series would be without purpose. Instead looking for the coherent text in single episodes, we should attempt to also see them in the context of an entire season where possible. Some series indeed do have plots that transcend seasons and in these cases the coherence should be seen from the context of the entire series. YPM only ran for one season, though it spanned four years, so its narratives should be considered also from the context of the entire series.<sup>112</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Comedy and satire

I have referred to YPM previously as both a comedy and a political satire. Those familiar with semiotics or narrative theory would argue that these represent two different forms of stories or more accurately genres or narrative types.<sup>113</sup> In fact all stories can be placed within one of the four main narrative types, tragedy, romance, comedy and satire. It might seem necessary to locate the material as belonging to one or the other, but it is not uncommon for material to fit the description of a mixed type.<sup>114</sup> The listing of narrative types can take other names too and is sometimes abbreviated to merely three main types, with satire forming a part of comedy.<sup>115</sup> Also the names given to the types may vary from source to source as for example romance is sometimes referred to as an epic.<sup>116</sup> The nomenclature and listing above is merely the convention chosen for this thesis. The differentiation of satire from comedy is also very significant, since it precisely because of coding satire as a subgenre of comedy that has made it difficult to see its political potential.<sup>117</sup> There is a tendency of seeing the political as being serious and rational and comedy as the exact opposite, an escape from reality. It is however exactly this attempt of 'escape' from something that forms an analytical, critical and rational link to that something, albeit in varying degrees.<sup>118</sup>

I claim that the material conforms to the definitions of two types that were mentioned. It can be classified as both as a political comedy and as a political satire, depending the mode of emplotting one gives it. As stated, it is in fact not uncommon that the material displays characteristics of multiple genres. Genres are in a constant state of change and depend on the interpreter's view as

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<sup>112</sup> Matheson, 2005, p. 92.

<sup>113</sup> Genre, mode of emplotting and narrative types are often used synonymously and so is the case with this thesis.

<sup>114</sup> Ringmar 2006, p. 404.

<sup>115</sup> Kuusisto 2009, p. 605.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 607.

<sup>117</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

much as on the actual intention of the material's creator. It is not hard to find alternative genre definitions for most texts, films or recordings.<sup>119</sup>

To be able to claim YPM belongs to the genres of comedy and satire the other two must also be briefly defined. Tragedies take very fatalistic forms. The characters are embedded in a central crisis that forms the basis of the story.<sup>120</sup> Any hero presented attempting to fight against the established fatalistic structure will be destroyed. It is characteristic in tragedies that the more idealistic and noble the intentions of the characters are, the harder the downfall they will face. The world is governed by unquestionable laws that will re-establish themselves crushing any opposition. The audience of a tragedy experiences catharsis through the fall of the protagonist(s). This is because while often they are sufficiently familiar to identify with and be endeared to, they demonstrate a strange recklessness and wildness that seem alien to the audience.<sup>121</sup> These latter characteristics make the fall of the protagonist a necessity. The Borg's<sup>122</sup> fatalistic slogan "Resistance is futile" from the television series *Star Trek* summarizes tragedy quite nicely.<sup>123</sup>

Romance – or epic or fairy tale – conjures forth hope in the audience. The characters wade through countless obstacles set on their path by powerful and decisive enemies. The main characters always have a noble and just cause in mind and in the end gain in the end the ultimate prize, whether it be love, knowledge, peace, or something else.<sup>124</sup> Most romantic stories use metaphors to embed the main characters and their quest with alternate meanings of good and greatness. The obstacles and enemies take the meanings of evil and corruption. Romantic stories end with the heroes achieving their goals and order being restored or improved, usually with the enemy either, vanquished, converted or depowered.<sup>125</sup> A romantic plot is the counterpart to the tragic one. Whereas the tragic plot makes failures understandable and even desirable, the romantic one applauds triumph and success, determination and nobility.<sup>126</sup>

Comedy is often defined as a story that moves the characters from chaos, dysfunctional relationships and unfortunate circumstances to an ultimately happy conclusion, a more harmonious state. This harmonious state is reached despite multiple amusing setbacks and complications that the characters have to solve and work through. In this sense YPM demonstrates this characteristic in the

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<sup>119</sup> Chandler 2007, p. 159.

<sup>120</sup> Charniawska 2004, p. 21.

<sup>121</sup> Kuusisto 2009, p. 611.

<sup>122</sup> A partly cybernetic, partly human hive-mind race from the science fiction television series *Star Trek*.

<sup>123</sup> Ringmar 2006, p. 405.

<sup>124</sup> Charniawska 2004, p. 21.

<sup>125</sup> Ringmar 2006, p. 405.

<sup>126</sup> Kuusisto 2009, p. 607.

way that every episode begins with the laying out of a disruption to the status quo of the world. The episode then deals with all the complications this causes, both organizational and interpersonal, but ultimately the characters either return to a situation where everyone is pleased (this state usually takes the form of a return to the status quo), or at least there is a sense of justice being served. The difficulties encountered are often the result of an 'obstructing character' or characters and their actions. Otherwise the move toward a happy conclusion would lack any form of narrative. It is these characters that form the comings of the comedies. In YPM the obstructing character traits can be found in two characters, the minister when he attempts to disrupt the status quo and his cabinet secretary who does his very best to prevent any possible change. Both characters are however necessary for the functioning of the whole and they cannot exist without each other, a characteristic very typical to comedies. As it can be seen YPM fulfils the requirements for a comedy even by strict semiotic definitions without any difficulty. It does however also have another characteristic, that of the satire.<sup>127</sup>

While comedy aims at moving towards a harmonious state, satire does not have this as a primary goal. The principal mode of emplotting used in a satire is to bring out the ridiculousness and absurdity of occurrences mainly by the use of irony through contradiction, scepticism and paradox.<sup>128</sup> This can make it difficult to reach at the meaning of a satire, since it is rarely clear-cut or easily digestible.<sup>129</sup> That is precisely why taking note of the visual and audible aspects in the material is important to do. All of these forms are present in YPM in varying degrees. The entire series is an exaggeration of scepticism towards politics in the United Kingdom. This applies not only to the politicians, but also to the civil service. The irony of the series can easily be thought of as the fact that the person with the most formal decisive power in the realm is inept, unwilling and ultimately unable to accomplish any change. The paradox is identifiable at least from the thought that if this has always been the case, how could Great Britain ever have formed an empire in the first place.

### ***4.3 Humour and politics***

What makes a satire or a comedy a valuable source of investigation for international relations? Is there a connection to be found between the binary pair of humour and politics? Is such a pair truly binary in the first place? In the 1980's the answers to these questions may not have been as apparent as they are nowadays. With the constant increase of communication technology, people are

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<sup>127</sup> Czarniawska 2004, p. 21.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, p. 15.

becoming more and more aware of competing sources of news and information. People tend to distrust official sources as biased and politically influenced, which is in part due to various scandals about journalistic ethics and outright censorship in some parts of the world becoming public knowledge. News and information becomes a façade that the audience attempts to see past, only to be confronted by a new façade. Political satires such as late night shows become one form of looking past the first façade in their attempt to show the perceived character and image of the politicians and their policies. The audience might actually “...prefer to use political satire as a means of finding common-sense truths behind the artifice and spectacle of the powerful than continue to access existing journalistic forms.”<sup>130</sup> Satire can therefore be seen as a tool to unmask the show that is politics. To claim that this has only been the case now that it has become blatantly apparent would be naïve. Surely the same mechanisms of political satire have been present ever since democracy was first introduced and image became a major part of any political campaign. If the audience indeed “uses” satire to see into the deeper truths of politics, then surely that means it also requires a foreknowledge of the themes the satire addresses. This requirement makes political satire a genre that forms a significant political discourse and that demands a politically savvy audience to be appreciated.<sup>131</sup>

Expanding on satire as a tool for unmasking the show the politics, we can argue that humour – an essential result of most satire – in general can serve the role of social critique, thus bringing comedy also into the mix. It was already stated that humour is connected to politics in so far as it is an escape from something. The tie in with the actual event comes from the realization that converting something serious to something laughable allows us to approach it from a healthy distance, not seek an escape from it as traditionally has been thought. The laughed at object can be dissected, taken apart, investigated from all sides and poked at in a familiar and safe manner. Thus laughter conveys a form of analytic power to the laugher with respect to the laughed-at object. Satire can in fact been seen as openly aggressive towards the objects it targets. The ridiculing of the object is the result of a verbal attack upon it – usually an object that holds power over us – but implicit in that verbal attack is a judgment as well. While YPM doesn’t directly address the actual ‘real’ world events of the time, unlike the late night shows of today, it can be considered to have represented an attempt at seeing through the façade of public relations into the functioning of number 10 Downing Street, taking it apart and poking at it from various angles. It is a satire of the political system in general.

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<sup>130</sup> Riegert 2008, p. 13.

<sup>131</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, p. 15.

Additionally, many of the elements being satirised can be traced to real world events, albeit quite distant ones.<sup>132</sup>

Western leaders have traditionally used the narrative types of comedy and satire to describe the quarrels and misunderstandings in cases where they wish to leave room for understanding and compromise. Other narrative types are used for different purposes. Tragic plots are used to justify inactivity in events where the speakers don't wish to take action. They do however wish to transmit understanding and sympathy, but the speakers and audience are not expected to take part or be able to take part in the actual solving of the problem. Heroic epics take the form of the romantic narrative type and serve the exact opposite. They give purpose to the audience indicating the nobility of intervention and duty to act. This narrative type is used when leaders wish frame events in order to gain approval for action. It is clear that narrative types, or plots have become powerful political tools to influence audiences. They are used in directly and openly to justify different approaches, sometimes to the same issues.<sup>133</sup>

Since narrative types have such significance in defining the expected reaction of the audience, an understanding of the narrative type present in any story will help place the events portrayed within it in their correct context. I already established that the narrative types employed in YPM are comedy and satire. Accepting that and considering that YPM also fits the description of political communication we would expect the events to be portrayed within it to be of events where the authors feel a certain level of political and decisional manoeuvrability is desired. The argument can be further expanded to include the conclusion that events left undealt with within the series are the kind that the authors consider better fitting under the narrative types of romance or tragedy. While the events described are fictional are modelled after real world events, either actual or potential, the thesis is concerned with what kind of a world view the series attempts to portray rather than what its connection to reality is, the question of whether the events have real world parallels or not becomes redundant.

#### **4.4 TV satires**

The problem of televising influential satires is that most television networks have traditionally believed that satires need to be funny, while in reality a smart satire doesn't. The characteristic of ridiculing something, raising some object to the level of absurdity and thus exposing it need not necessarily be humorous. By forcing satire into the mould of a sitcom with the societal ridiculing

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<sup>132</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, p. 8-12.

<sup>133</sup> Kuusisto 2009, pp. 607-614.

made to comply with the format of a joke, satires lose a lot the potential they have to transmit their message. The humorous aspect may turn into a momentary comical carnival that exposes some negatively felt thing of society, but in doing so defuses the tensions that might have otherwise led to concrete change. Satires – which are dynamic and unpredictable – are forced into the predictable form of a sitcom, having the same underlying jokes and repetitive stereotypes time and time again.<sup>134</sup>

From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a clear and shift though from safe sitcoms to more openly critical and purely satirical programming. The usual explanation for this is this is the expansion of commercial television networks that do not need to please the major part of the viewers, but can be content with catering to the wants of a smaller demography that chooses to watch or order that channel. Another reason is the trivialization of television and transformation in the way people obtain their information that was alluded to in the chapter on politicotainment. The popularity of satire in the private networks has even led some public networks to introduce their own regular satires.<sup>135</sup> Satire can be said to be on the rise.<sup>136</sup>

While YPM was made by a national network – the British Broadcasting Corporation – and before the explosive expansion of private television networks, it can be considered an early attempt to probe the audience’s attitudes towards more ever clearer political satires. YPM clearly fits under the description of a humorous and safe sitcom with its underlying joke already having been presented and the repetitive stereotypes soon to be. The satiric element within it is however clearly present, requiring the audience to engage themselves mentally just to be able to understand what is going on.<sup>137</sup>

## **5 The series**

### **5.1 Presenting Yes Prime Minister**

The narrative types YPM conforms with have already been discussed, along with a short reference as to which specific characteristics of the series render it a comedy and a satire. Here I will present the series in more depth by first explaining what the series is, then explaining the main storyline and finally presenting the main characters.

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<sup>134</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, pp. 10-155.

<sup>135</sup> For an example see the Finnish Broadcasting Company’s series *Itsevaltiaat*.

<sup>136</sup> Bolan 2008, pp. 59-60.

<sup>137</sup> Gray, Jones, Thompson 2009, pp. 13-15.

Nisbet's summary of the series was already presented earlier in this thesis, but a more formal presentation may be sought from the DVD box cover. It introduces YPM with the following description:

"Named one of the Top Ten TV programs of all time by the British Film Institute, this brilliantly observed comedy of manners pits the well-meaning Prime Minister Jim Hacker against the machinations of the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Humphrey Appleby, in the ultimate political marriage of inconvenience."<sup>138</sup>

From the description we can begin to identify some of the characters present within the series. A binary pair is framed of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary which conforms to the claim that they form the main characters of a comic plot. One attempts to create change in a presumably chaotic situation, while the other strains himself to prevent this. The end result is however a more harmonious state where the status of each character is reaffirmed and the audience is shown that to each force there is a counter force, a Yin to a Yang, thus creating acceptance to moves by politicians that may even seem radical at the time. After all, the counter force will balance it out.

There are three main represented character roles in YPM, all of which have already been mentioned in this thesis, but will now be presented more fully. The title bearing character, the Prime Minister, is the Rt. Hon.<sup>139</sup> James Hacker (Paul Eddington). He was educated in the London School of Economics, a fact that is referred to in a condescending form by the other characters that attended Cambridge or Oxford. The PM represents the politician in British Government as portrayed in YPM. He is constantly consumed by a fear of drop in popularity and finds his position and stances constantly insecure. He is however driven by a drive to augment his popularity and comes up again and again with ideas and schemes which, while they might also be good for the nation, are primarily aimed at gaining more votes and support for him. His knowledge of world and domestic affairs, as well as of diplomacy is thin at best, allowing for him to be led or misled at will. He takes the role of the protagonist in the comedy that is YPM. The chosen name for this character, Jim Hacker, can be thought of to have symbolic meaning, since in is the noun form of the verb 'to hack' and hacking can have various meanings. If interpreted as someone who hacks away at things it is indicative of his disruptive tendencies towards the established order. Then again, if used in the colloquial form 'to hack it', Hacker's name can indicate someone who ultimately accomplishes what they set out to do.

A counterpart and an opposing force to the PM is presented in the character of Sir Humphrey Appleby (Nigel Hawthorne), the Cabinet Secretary and joint head of the civil service (together with

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<sup>138</sup> YPM - DVD Box, back cover.

<sup>139</sup> Right Honourable

the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury). The Cabinet Secretary's task is from episode to another to attempt to persuade the PM that his attempts at disrupting the status quo are foolish and based on wrong assumptions. The only change that can be allowed though is an increase in the civil service's power or pay. In this way Sir Humphrey is not beyond seeking personal gain. He is in many ways the power behind the throne. He is by far one of the most senior civil servants in the service and uses all his experience in persuasion, distraction and disruption in obtaining his ends. Being an Oxford graduate of the arts, he considers all universities other than Oxford and Cambridge to not merit the status of universities, a view shared by many characters in the higher ranks of the civil service, such as by the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Frank and the previous Cabinet Secretary Sir Arnold. The role of Sir Humphrey is to bring forth the comedy in otherwise reasonable sounding changes by PM. Together they form the comical duo whose tug of war between change and stability exposes more exaggerated and absurd arguments along the way, until one side wins for that episode, although usually not without compromising somewhat their own position.

Bernard Woolley (Derek Fowlds) is the third character of the main trio. A mid level civil servant he performs the task of the Private Secretary to the PM. The character is at a midpoint between the PM and his Cabinet Secretary. His loyalties can be seen as shifting between the two as he juggles his position as a member of the civil service and his duties as a Private Secretary to the PM, on occasion siding with one, then on other time with the other. He has firm grasp of the civil service's functions, but his knowledge pales in comparison to Sir Humphreys. A frequent characteristic of the character is that he is almost always present, but contributes very little in the actual content of the comedy or the satire. He throws in quick quips and 'one liners' relieving the tension from the two main characters. In this way he represents the comic relief character of several dramas, while the PM and the Cabinet Secretary take on the roles of hero and anti-hero.

In addition to the main three, there are a number of supporting characters that appear occasionally the most notable of whom are:

- ◆ Mrs. Annie Hacker (Diana Hoddinott): The PM's wife. A sound and down to earth working lady. She helps remind the PM of the common sense and the people he serves.
- ◆ Mrs. Dorothy Wainwright (Deborah Norton): The PM's political advisor. A counter force to the civil service, often at odds with them. She makes apparent how the civil service attempts to manipulate the PM, while also exposing illogicalities within the prevailing system.
- ◆ Sir Arnold Robinson (John Nettleton): The previous Cabinet Secretary before Sir Humphrey Appleby. He shares Sir Humphrey's views of the civil service and is occasionally looked to for advice on delicate matters by Sir Humphrey and even the PM when he fears for Sir Humphreys loyalty.

- ◆ Sir Frank Gordon (Peter Cellier): Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and a joint head of the civil service (together with the Cabinet Secretary). Both an ally and a competitor of Sir Humphrey, like whom, his loyalties lie above all to himself and the civil service.

## **5.2 Production and the episodes**

YPM was produced by the BBC as a continuation to their previously popular series Yes Minister. Before the beginning of the YPM two Christmas specials were also released with the same cast, a three minute short in 1982 and a one hour show on in 1984. The latter of those, titled “Party Games”, is included as research material for this thesis, since the first episode of YPM picks up directly from where that special ends. It also sets up the roles of the characters and contains a significant foreign affairs storyline. Furthermore, the episode is included in the DVD box set of YPM indicating that it is considered by the producers to form a concrete part of the YPM continuity.

All of YPM’s episodes, as well as the Christmas specials and the original Yes Minister series were co-authored by Sir Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn. With the exception of Party Games, the previously mentioned were all also directed by Sydney Lotterby. The Christmas special Party Games was directed by Peter Whitmore., but in a manner mostly coinciding with Lotterby’s. Having the same writers and producer throughout the series makes YPM very consistent from one episode to another, from both directional and scriptural points of view. YPM was aired in two seasons between January 1986 and January 1988. Both seasons consisted of 8 episodes and ran for weekly for approximately 2 consecutive months. They have hence forth been aired several times in multiple countries. A full list of the episodes being analysed, amended with their airing dates and descriptions can be found in Appendix 2.

Most of the events in the series take place indoors in what is supposed to be number 10 Downing Street, London. This includes the Prime minister’s living room, his sitting room, his cabinet meeting room, his office and the office of his private secretary Mr. Bernard Woolley. Other re-occurring scenes are the office of the Sir Humphrey’s personal office, located in the adjoining building to number 10 Downing Street, and what is presumably the cabinet mess, the location of which is not given at any point. The cabinet mess is merely presumed to be the recurring location, since it is not once specified but it is where Sir Humphrey, Sir Arnold and Bernard Woolley meet often and enjoy their lunches.

The Christmas special Party Games has the most out-of-studio scenes of all the episodes, with a scene taking place on the street when the police pull the Minister over for drunken driving, another

when the minister and his private secretary share a dialogue in the Minister's car en route to where the Minister is supposed to give a speech. The following scene is the actual speech which is also given out-of-studio. The distinction is made in a very clear-cut manner with the contrast of the non-studio scenes being markedly softer and the focus less precise. This creates both the feeling of a contrasting setup to the studio but also leaves the audience with the thought that this is no-longer part of the seeing through into the inner workings of number 10 Downing Street, but rather what we as citizens may observe in our day to day lives. It is the public image we are observing when the characters are taken out of their studio surroundings. The rest of the series merely explains the working behind what is being publicly announced. This effect of the non studio scenes being the actual façade we face as citizens every day is further emphasized by the handling of the camera. While all scenes within studios are filmed with the camera on a stand or tripod, the out-of-studio scenes are made appear as though filmed through a handheld or shoulder mounted camera, with slight wobbles and movements up and down constantly. This technique gives the audience an interactive role in the series as the real spectator to the events, making the audience focus less on what is being said, but more on how it is being said. As I have mentioned, most communication is based on non-verbal forms and the more immersed we are as with an interactive role, the more we pay attention to these. On the side of audio, the non-studio scenes have background noises clearly audible, whereas the studio filmed ones merely the foreground dialogues taking place, furthering the interaction with the audience even more.

As mentioned in all studio-filmed scenes the camera is set on a tripod or stand with only very minor and slow zooming occurring to bring the speaking characters into focus. This means there are not many direct zooming vectors within the series. The exception to this is when the camera follows the characters as they move within the set and someone enters in the same scene. In these cases the camera makes a short zoom towards the new character, but not so much as to hide the other characters, or bring the new attendee into uneven focus when compared to the other characters.<sup>140</sup> However, from one scene to another the image may vary from a wide angle one, showing several speakers to merely showing one. This brings the speaker at each moment, along with their dialogue into focus and emphasis.

The audience's focus is directed in large amount to the actual discourse and characters within the scenes by eliminating much of the diversity and intrigue of the background. I mentioned already that in the in-studio scenes all background noises are eliminated, except to make specific and short points, such as when Mr. Hacker explains to Mrs. Hacker that at least their apartment is quiet and is

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<sup>140</sup> E.g. YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 13.00

immediately, but only for less than 30 seconds, interrupted by the horse guard's playing.<sup>141</sup> Visually the background is brought regressed into a secondary role by very calm colours to offset the strong and lively discussion taking place in the scene. The colours of the furniture are mostly of similar hue allowing them to 'disappear' out of mind. The denigration of the background is finally concluded by bringing only the characters into focus with the background forming an unreal haze.

## 6 Analysis

### 6.1 *The pilot episode sets the stage*

The tie-in between the two distinct, yet related series Yes Minister and Yes, Prime Minister is the 1984 Christmas special, titled Party Games. In it the then minister for administrative affairs Jim Hacker is elevated to the position of Prime Minister, Sir Humphrey to permanent secretary to the cabinet and Mr. Woolley to the Prime Minister's private secretary. All these changes are brought about through diverse covert dealing behind the scenes by Jim Hacker and Sir Humphrey giving the audience a feeling that becoming Prime minister has less to do with capacity and more to do with pure politics. This incapacity of the new Prime Minister to handle the traditionally perceived duties befalling that position is carried throughout the series.

The pilot episode's length is 150% that of the other episodes, at one hour compared to the 40 minutes of the others, as a great deal of matters are addressed within it other than the mere placement of the characters. These manifest themselves as distinct discourses that can be found in the actual episodes of the series YPM later on and are only slightly amended as the series progresses. This is not uncommon, since pilot episodes are often made in order to 'feel out' the audience about a new idea for a show, to observe their reactions and deduce the feasibility of launching the actual episodes. This was most likely the case with YPM too, as there was a gap of over a year between the airing of the pilot episode and the first of the YPM series. The above mentioned extensive introduction of underlying discourses and longer run time also indicate that audiences' reactions were being checked with this episode. It therefore does not show such correlation with actual historical events as the rest of the series does, but is important to understand how the series is constructed further down the line.

There are three main discourses that can be identified from the first episode. These are the discourses I have labelled *properness*-, *ineptitude*- and *power* discourses. In addition there is a less used, but existent discourse present that I have labelled a *nationalist* discourse, although it is mainly

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<sup>141</sup> YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 13.30

a criticism of nationalism. The main three discourses can be seen to be intertwined in some ways and have several subcategories within them, which I shall strive to demonstrate.

### **6.1.1 Properness discourse**

The meaning of appearances becomes apparent quite early in the series, in fact from scene one, as Bernard interrupts Mr. Hacker from reading cabinet defence papers with something much more urgent, the signing of Christmas cards. The form of signature on each card becomes of paramount importance in the ensuing conversation before a tremendous stack of cards. Even giving room for a comic interpretation of the dialogue it brings to the front quite plainly how politicians and even the civil service consider the proper behaviour at one's office of significant importance, a theme which is echoed further in the episode and the series. The idea of politicians using excessive time on issues related to their image while the issues of the realm are relocated to a secondary position is increased when one compares the sizes of the papers Jim Hacker has before him. The defence paper is a mere booklet about an inch thick, while the Christmas cards are stacked in eight separate foot tall piles and supposedly more are at party headquarters waiting to be signed. Jim Hacker notes he didn't sign those last year, but Bernard explains that now that he is the party chairman he should. The concession to the new burden placed upon him by his office is made clear by a long sigh.<sup>142</sup>

The concern with properness and appearance is undoubtedly something most citizens in a democracy associate with politicians, but the discourse present in the scene described above demonstrates the power that office, or structure is seen as having over the Minister. He is demanded by his position to do certain things in a certain manner, no matter his own inclinations. The comedy arises from the fact that the thing that needs doing is counterintuitive to what the citizens might consider of higher priority, namely the cabinet defence papers. Again, this is a theme carried throughout the series. The lack of power of the individual before the pressure of office is indirectly referred to when the Minister would like not to send a Christmas card to Maurice, an EEC commissioner in Brussels, who is trying to standardize the euro-sausage and rename the British sausage as emulsified high-fat awful-tube. His concession to sending this card as well is left as presumed, since Hacker merely places the card back on the pile while moving on to discuss the issue of the sausage. The importance of appearance and image is made clear by the juxtaposition of the innocent sounding name British sausage and the EEC's foul suggestion. This simple change is indicated as having the potential of finishing Jim Hacker's career, should he not find a solution to the matter. That the issue is one of pure image and not any material fact is emphasized at the end of

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<sup>142</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 00.45-01.55

the scene when Hacker reads out the contents of a British sausage, becoming clearly nauseas upon the realization that when broken down in such a way it doesn't sound appetizing at all. Bernard mentions that "Perhaps the EEC commissioner is right"<sup>143</sup> to which Hacker gives the response that drives home the importance of image: "He may be right, but it would be extremely unpopular with the voters"<sup>144</sup>. Fact is hence seconded to image without argument. The discourse in this scene now shifts to one of power.<sup>145</sup>

While structures may be seen as demanding certain actions and forms of behaviour from the holders of office, properness and correctness is also emphasized for its own sake in other parts of the episode. Particularly Sir Humphrey places great emphasis on the importance of eloquent speech. While this is used by him as a tool to distract the listener from the fact that nothing of importance is in fact being said, it formalizes the speaker as someone of superior mind by belittling the listener. The way such eloquent speech manifests itself is by the lengthening of phrases by unnecessary clarification of what has been stated, using secondary remarks and by the choice of words being implemented. A good example of all three can be found when Sir Humphrey tells Jim Hacker (JH) he will be appointed secretary to the cabinet. As a side note, by this time the Christmas cards have been removed from the table in the Minister's office, supposedly signed.

**Transcript 3:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 09:21-09.54.

- 1 HA Minister, I have some very grave news. {sits back down after having just stood up to leave}
- 2 JH Yes Humphrey? {leans forward in concern}
- 3 HA The relationship, which I might tentatively venture to aver, has been not without some degree of reciprocal utility and perhaps even occasional gratification, is approaching a point of irreversible bifurcation and... to be brief, is in the propinquity of its ultimate regrettable termination.
- 4 JH (7.0) I se::e.
- 5 HA I'm... on my way out.

From this short dialogue, and particularly phrase 3, we can see Sir Humphrey's *modus operandi*, or the rhetorical tools his character employs often and with ease. Present are, the use of unnecessary clarification, for Sir Humphrey has already asserted there is a relationship, yet he wishes to reaffirm it by using the side phrase "...which I might tentatively venture to aver...". This at the same time lengthens the phrase and confuses the listener by a form of repetition of the same, but in different words. The choice of words represents Sir Humphrey's classical education, which he invokes on several occasions further in the series. He chooses to avoid common English and opts for the more confusing classical forms of the words. To assert becomes to aver, to be useful to both is phrased as

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<sup>143</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 03.15-3.17.

<sup>144</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 03.17-3.20.

<sup>145</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 01.55-02.25

having reciprocal utility, separation becomes bifurcation, propinquity indicates something soon to be and an end is the termination. All these words used in just one phrase, combined with the lengthening by side remarks truly leaves the listener in the dark as to what was said, as is apparent by the Minister's pause and prolonged, unsure answer in phrase 4. To drive home the point of being of a higher academic level, Sir Humphrey summarizes his previous remark in phrase 5, although this too leaves the Minister in the dark as to its true meaning.

The scene is of further demonstrative significance for the importance of image, since the matter in question did not require any form of deception, for it is apparent from both the previous scene, where Sir Humphrey is made aware of the change and the ensuing conversation, that both Sir Humphrey and the Minister welcome the change with open hearts. Nonetheless, Sir Humphrey chose to use eloquent speech out of habit to make sure Hackers idea of him was unchanged. The point of this being the operational form of Sir Humphrey's speech is reasserted later in the episode when Sir Humphrey explains to the Minister that there are security question marks over both of the candidates aspiring to be Prime Minister. The scene has a third party present, the Chief Whip Jeffrey (Je), who although not a member of the civil service, shares a similar task to theirs in that he too must control and rein in the other politicians.

**Transcript 4:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 34.04-34.37.

- 1 HA There are certain items of confidential information... which, whilst in theory they might be susceptible of innocent interpretation, do nevertheless contain a sufficient element of, shall we say, ambiguity so that where they to be presented in a less than generous manner to an uncharitable mind, they might be source of considerable embarrassment and even conceivably hazard, were they to impinge upon the deliberations of an office of more than usual sensibility.
- 2 JH I'm sorry?
- 3 HA {shifts back in his chair, sighs and taps his hands on his legs }
- 4 Je He's talking about security question marks

Once again, this short dialogue demonstrates the eloquent classical phrasing of Sir Humphreys, where something that may be overlooked becomes susceptible of innocent interpretation, something that may be misinterpreted is something that contains an element of ambiguity, without explanation is replaced by being presented in a less than generous manner, an opponent is a less than charitable mind, to apply for is to impinge upon the deliberation and the Prime Minister's position is an office of more than usual sensitivity. Once, again, all these are used in a single phrase and the politician is clearly left in the dark as to the meaning of the conversation.

Emphasizing properness in this manner indicates the importance of image, what the people around one think about oneself. The importance of the institution of classical education can also be seen as

setting the demand for Sir Humphrey to bring it forth when possible, adding to the previously mentioned effect of structure being more significant than individual choice. The Christmas card dialogue can also be taken to indicate the importance of image, not only the power of structures over individuals, as the form of signature is the most important aspect of signing the cards.<sup>146</sup> The preoccupation with matters of image, indicate that ideas play a key role in the characters' understanding of the world and of themselves. The idea people hold of them determines what they must do, limits their options and narrows their choices. Both Sir Humphrey and Jim Hacker choose to reassert the image people have of the position, which exists thanks to the people and themselves believing in it in turn. Thus the properness discourse in the first episode has a somewhat idealist and a strong structuralist character.

In the episode there are several scenes that demonstrate covert dealings, or things that are done behind the scenes in order to maintain an appearance of properness. While these in general fit more readily under the title of power discourse, they can also be seen to show an adherence to properness. Again, the image of how something is presented is held important for fear that showing the true nature of the dealings would lead to a blocking of these dealings. The idea people have of a position defines what can be done there and any change must be done by formalizing any change to fit the ideas of people they deal with. The importance of appearances is very aptly demonstrated when Jim Hacker meets with both of the candidates for Prime Minister. Since his support could be decisive in an election he meets with both candidates in order to decide whom to support. He ends up however promising both candidates he can hint at support for them, but that he must appear impartial because of his position. Both candidates are separately satisfied with this, demonstrating an understanding for the need to maintain a certain image, as long as they get what they want. The image of the head of the party is something that places constraints on his behaviour and possible acts.

### **6.1.2 Power discourse**

Many of the aforementioned parts that demonstrate the properness dialogue have a tie in with the power dialogue. The most prominent of these is the lastly mentioned covert dealings aspect. Both primary characters attempt to maximize their own power without wanting it to seem so. In this way the power discourse ties into the properness discourse, but with some characters the reason for this seems to be not so much in the keeping of one's image and reputation but so that their strive for power is not hindered. Covert dealings are done primarily with the goal of furthering the characters'

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<sup>146</sup> Whether the signature should be in the form: "Jim", "Jim Hacker", "Jim and Annie", "Annie and Jim Hacker, or "Love from Annie and Jim".

own positions. Sir Humphrey is the first to show this clearly when he is discussing with Sir Arnold the matter of who shall be the next Cabinet Secretary. When the topic becomes clear to Sir Humphrey and he realizes Sir Arnold's recommendation could mean he gets the job he attempts to convince him of having all the formal characteristics required by the Cabinet Secretary. Only to Sir Arnold (AR), that isn't enough as he too is out to get his own.

**Transcript 5: YPM – Party Games, 1984, 05.40-08.21.**

- 1 AR You see in this job the problem isn't really finding the answers, it's finding the questions. We need the man who can find the key questions.
- 2 HA (8.0){takes a sip of his drink and smiles slyly in the end upon realization} By the way Arnold, to change the subject completely. What will you be doing when you retire?
- 3 AR Ah... very good question. (1,5) Very good question.
- 4 HA It's just there might be jobs you could pick, ways you could serve the country which you're successor... whoever he might be, could put your way- persuade you to undertake.
- 5 AR Well I have been giving it some thought. As you know I shall be chairman of the Bank Occidental [yes] and there will be directorships of IBM [], BP and that sort of thing [((hums approval))], but I was thinking..
- 6 HA Yes? {takes out a pen and paper to write down these demands}
- 7 AR Well, the chairmanship of the opera-house trust will be coming up next year.
- 8 HA Chairman of Covent Garden.
- 9 AR And the chancellorship of Oxford. [((hums approval))] And then the deputy chairmanship of the Bank of England would be a-
- 10 HA A challenge.
- 11 AR A challenge, exactly. And head of the security commission and the presidency of the Anglo-Caribbean association would give one...
- 12 HA A chance to be of service.
- 13 AR Precisely. Especially during the winter months.
- 14 HA Well I'm sure any successor worth his salt will be able to arrange these Arnold.
- 15 AR You think so? That's very reassuring, very reassuring. But there is another thing. Certain advice one may have given the Prime Minister could, if it emerged be misinterpreted.
- 16 HA What sort of advice?
- 17 AR Well all sensible and reasonable obviously, but advice about using troops during strikes. Very sensible precaution that they should be armed, but... taken out of context machine guns..
- 18 HA Oh, I'm sure that need never come out.
- 19 AR And I did suggest negotiations with South Africa about reactivating the Simonstown naval base. Absolutely sensible strategically of course and a great help with the Falklands, but if one were in line for the secretary-generalship of the commonwealth.
- 20 HA Hm.. Embarasing. And of course you would be in line to be secretary-generalship of the commonwealth.
- 21 AR Would I? How gratifying. {sly smile}
- 22 HA And I'm sure that the right successor would see no problem in keeping those files under wraps.
- 23 AR Good. Anyway, to get back to our original point. I think my colleagues and I can now see our way forward to placing your name at the head of the list.

The above dialogue can be divided into five parts. In the above transcription the different parts are separated with an empty line between them. The first contains phrases 1-3 and demonstrates the forming of an agreement that some covert dealings and downright corruption is to ensue. Both parties are aware quite clearly what will happen as is made apparent by their facial expressions,

having a sly smile upon them. Part two is formed by the standalone phrase 4 and establishes that the following conversation must be held under the guise of properness, supposedly to avoid anyone thinking such corrupt dealings were afoot, tying the dialogue in with the discourse of properness. The third part is the actual listing of demands by Sir Arnold in phrases 5-13. The fourth part forms the sealing of the agreements of Sir Humphrey to meet Sir Arnold's demands and the reciprocal agreement that Sir Arnold will recommend Sir Humphrey for the position of his successor which is divided into two separate parts in phrases 14 and 23. In between these is a short conversation formed by phrases 15-22 in which the keeping of appearances is of primary concern to Sir Arnold.

The entire dialogue demonstrates the same mechanics that are present elsewhere in the same episode as well. Properness is seen as a structural requirement of any office in government, but unlike with the politicians, the civil service members can actually plot behind the backs of their political masters to get their way. This seems to emphasize the significance of the individuals holding a secretarial position in the civil service above the structural demands placed upon them. While properness is demanded by the structure, a maximization of power is completely dependent on the individual's willingness to work behind the structural constraints. All this must be done in secret, since people's reputations are seen as much more valuable than their actual capacities, as Sir Arnold demonstrates by seeking to suppress embarrassing facts about his past. An official should never admit to being wrong, as Sir Arnold doesn't either, for anything can be worded to make error a mere matter of interpretation. The concern with personal image indicates its importance for personal gain, but also an importance of image for itself. Thus the dialogue demonstrates a slight tendency towards idealism too, albeit for the purpose of power maximizing in the most part. The dialogue further shows that power maximizing is not limited to the main characters. In fact, even most of the secondary characters engage in such behaviour. The main character to perform these forms of rhetoric game is Sir Humphrey, fitting squarely with his character as the antagonist of the plot.

From the audiences point of view this kind of scene raises doubts as to whether government acts are to be trusted on face value, seeing as they will be worded to sound logical in any case and the more embarrassing issues suppressed. At the very least it raises strong doubts as to the appointing of officials in government, an issue echoed when the new Prime Minister is elected through another covert dealing between Sir Humphrey and Jim Hacker. These kinds of sentiments can erode a people's trust in government, although at the same time bringing it out in comedy may help to defuse any built up tensions and anxieties the people may have.

From the politicians' point of view personal gain is obtained through meticulous concern with votes. Any action by a politician must be weighed against its potential influence on the voting habits of the constituents, even promotions. This is markedly different from how the civil service views advancement, since within the civil service a promotion is of value in itself, whereas the politician may refuse a promotion on the grounds that it would cause him to lose popularity and hence be detrimental to them in the long run. Jim Hacker demonstrates this quite well when he has consulted both candidates to the PM's office and discovered that depending on who gets the job, he could be promoted to either Foreign Secretary or Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both are considered considerable promotions, but Bernard Woolley, true to his role as a middleman between the protagonist and antagonist, makes Jim Hacker see the jobs from their voter potentiality side and Jim quickly changes his mind.

**Transcript 6:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 30.27-31.38.

- 1 JH The real question is do I want to be Foreign Secretary or Chancellor of the Exchequer.  
2 BW Neither, do you?  
3 JH Why not?  
4 BW Well, they're both such terrible jobs.  
5 JH Are they? You're talking about two of the top three cabinet jobs.  
6 BW Well yes I realize that Minister.  
7 JH Oh Bernard, you're just a civil servant. You don't really understand politics.  
8 BW Sorry.  
9 JH To be a success in politics you have to be in limelight. You have a very high political profile as Chancellor of the Exchequer. And that has to be good for votes. You do see now, don't you?  
10 BW Well, yes. But with respect Minister, the chancellor is mister killjoy. I mean raising taxes on beer and cigarettes and cutting down on public expenditure goes down awfully badly with the electorate.  
11 JH Maybe I don't want to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. There's no escape in that job, is there?  
12 BW Unless, of course, you're sent to the foreign and commonwealth office instead as a punishment.  
13 JH Punishment?  
14 BW Oh yes. That's an even worse job.  
15 JH No votes in foreign affairs you mean?  
16 BW Exactly. The FCO loves foreigners but the British people want you to be nasty to them.  
17 JH Right. As far as world politics goes of course, the foreign office is just an irrelevance. We've no real power. We're just a sort of American missile base, that's all.

The concern with votes and appearing proper, though in order to obtain personal gain, demonstrates the institution of government and its separate offices to contain an element of normative power. Bernard indicates in phrases 10 and 16 that there are expectations of behaviour related with both offices and does not make any concession for the holder of the positions to make individual choices. The Chancellor will raise taxes and cut public expenditure and the Foreign Secretary must be nice to foreigners. These indicate a very strong structuralist approach in the scene, for institutions and structure is indicated as having strong normative power. The scene transcribed above also ties the conversation of internal politics with the international. As just stated, the scene indicates the presence of a strong normative element in the national level of government. By referring to the

international field and Great Britain's lack of power to influence world politics in the same scene, as is done by Jim Hacker in phrase 17, the audience associates the individual actors of government – politicians – with the individual actors of the international arena – states. Lack of power in the domestic field is thus equated with lack of power in the international arena as well.

The scene refers to power in world politics very directly, but by only mentioning it once in conjunction with a reference to military power, the two are equated. Power is seen as being military power. No reference is made to economic strength or normative power. The scene makes no concession to other forms of power even having significance, since there is an emphasis on 'real' power, which is equated with military power. This is a very materialist view of the nature of power that is not amended with such direct reference to the international field in other parts of the episode. The international arena is also shown to be a place of asymmetric power distributions, since the United States<sup>147</sup> is mentioned as having ruling military power over Great Britain, the latter being subjugated to a position of servitude with respect to the former.

As many examples can be drawn where domestic politics can be equated with international politics in the episode, the question arises that does the structural pressure of the office also show when we move from the realm of domestic politics to international relations? Indeed, is any such structure even seen to exist? Intuitively we expect similar behaviour from the characters in a series, irrespective of the setting they are in, or the issue being addressed. This is what gives the sitcom its predictability and also what makes it relevant to understand the ways the characters are portrayed as dealing with issues throughout the spectrum of political life. The episode does, however address the issue of international relations with more length than before by placing Jim Hacker at odds with the European Economic Community (EEC). The only international institution mentioned in the episode.

The international aspect within the episode is further directly shown in two parts and referenced in a third. Firstly, in the previously described scene at the beginning of the episode, when Hacker is told he must sign the Christmas cards and send one to Maurice in Brussels. The second part is at the end of the episode when Jim Hacker must orchestrate some public triumph to be considered a worthy candidate for the Prime Minister's office. As per their covert deal, Sir Humphrey assists with this and a scene ensues where Sir Humphrey, Jim Hacker and Maurice (Ma) from Brussels are present to discuss the euro-sausage issue. Hacker is in the dark as to what Sir Humphrey intends to say and merely 'goes with the flow'.

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<sup>147</sup> To be precise the reference Jim Hacker makes is to America, which colloquially will be accepted as being a reference to the United States.

**Transcript 7: YPM – Party Games, 1984, 47.37-49.59.**

- 1 Ma Jim... To what do I owe this pleasure?  
2 JH {jaw moves trying to find an answer, but ultimately just points at a chair}(3.0)  
3 HA {moving to sit behind the table} The minister asked me to arrange this little meeting to see if you could um.. help us with a problem. [JH: Pro- problem.]  
4 Ma Of course!  
5 HA Now the problem is that the EEC is becoming very unpopular here. Isn't that so minister?  
6 JH Very unpopular.  
7 Ma And you want to restore it's image.  
8 JH Yes.  
9 HA No.  
10 JH No.  
11 HA And the problem is that the minister feels there would be more votes... that, he would be better expressing the views of the British people by joining the attack on the EEC than by leaping to it's defence.  
12 JH Exactly.  
13 Ma But your government is committed to support us.  
14 JH {mouth moves inaudibly while searching for words. Looks to Sir Humphrey}  
15 HA The minister's point.. as I understand it, is that the government's commitment is to the concept and to the treaty. [JH: Treaty.] It's not committed to the institutions, nor to the practices, nor to the policies. The minister was giving me an example the other day, weren't you minister? {Hacker looks at Humphrey bewildered.} About food production.  
16 JH Oh yes. I've discovered that one of your officials spends all his time paying farmers to produce masses of surplus food, while somebody in the next office pays people to destroy the surpluses.  
17 Ma That's not true!  
18 HA No?  
19 Ma He is not in the next office. Not even on the same floor.  
20 HA And the minister has hundreds of similar examples haven't you minister? [JH: Hundreds.] And the nub of the problem is, that the minister is beginning to think that some member of the cabinet... ought to start telling the British people about them.  
21 Ma That would be intolerable. Even the Italians wouldn't stoop so low.  
22 JH The Italians aren't being asked to designate salami as emulsified-high-fat-awful-tubing.  
23 Ma Ah... (1,5) And what are you proposing? After all, we are committed to harmonization. We cannot call it the sausage. What do you suggest?  
24 HA Well politics is about presentation. Why don't we call it... the British sausage?  
25 Ma British sausage? Salchich Anglais. Salchize Inglese. British Würst! Yes! I think we could eh-... recommend that to the commission.

Both parts demonstrate an aspect that the EEC is considered an institution with real power and hence a significant element in the international arena. In the first part Hacker clearly states that the EEC has the power to stop the British people calling their sausage what they like and reiterating this even after discussing the point with Bernard by succumbing to his task of implementing EEC regulations. The EEC hence not only is shown as having power in the international field, but also with respect to the traditionally perceived domestic affairs of sovereign nations. While we know this to be the case legally, it is even debated today whether or not institutions have real significant power or is it simply a matter of courtesy that states bestow upon them, being willing to retract themselves at any point or does the institutions themselves have norms that are followed in when direct national interests are at stake. Jim Hacker refers to his duty with respect to government policy, indicating that in the international arena individuals are no longer the primary actors that international normative power works upon, but governments or states are.

The second part, referred to in the above transcript, retracts some of the power given to the institution of the EEC by showing that when personal gains are at stake, the members of government may be willing to join with groups opposing the EEC, not defend it. The government's is even directly said to not be committed to the institutions of the EEC, but since it is committed to the treaty and the concept of the EEC, it is in fact committed to the prime institution, even though the commitment to its sub-institutions may be questioned. It is however not argued that the name of the sausage must be changed because of demands placed on by the EEC, despite this apparent individualist possibility to oppose the institution. This foments the power of the EEC over Great Britain, or the power of an institution over a sovereign nation in a strong manner.

The pilot episode of YPM doesn't answer the question of material or idealist assumptions with respect to the international field, but the above transcribed scene does make reference to the idea that politics is about presentation, not facts. It can hardly be more clearly stated than in the way Sir Humphrey says it in phrase 24. This fits with the properness discourse, but is described here, since the scene primarily demonstrates elements of the power discourse. Another idealist assumption that fits with the properness dialogue is shown in phrases 20-21, when an indirect reference is made to the fact that the idea people hold of the EEC is the actual foundation of the entire institution. Despite the low idealist view present in the scene it does, however give a strong structuralist view making the concession that at least institutions have power in international relations through the structure they belong to.

As a side note, the euro-sausage scenes demonstrate something very characteristic of the entire YPM series with concern to plot structure. At the beginning a secondary problem is framed. The episode progresses with problems and issues of its own, until in the end the major problems are left unresolved, or solved inadequately while the secondary problem is re-established as the main issue of contention and eventual gratification.

### **6.1.3 Ineptitude discourse**

The third main discourse that is present in the series is one that demonstrates the failure of democracy, a lack of capacity and professionalism in politicians and which builds a need to reform the governmental system of Great Britain. I have labelled this discourse the ineptitude discourse, since all the aforementioned can be traced back to a difference of opinion by the public on what the duties and tasks of government should be and what they are portrayed as being. In this sense the ineptitude discourse ties in with the properness discourse and power discourses. After all, these partly dealt with covert dealings, the importance of image and the necessity to mislead the public.

The additional significance the ineptitude discourse brings is that there is a strong emphasis on that people in elected positions and who are making the decisions for the nation are in reality not only avoiding their perceived tasks, but would be unable to cope with them even should they choose to attempt it.

This ineptitude discourse can be seen as being present in Sir Humphrey's ways of addressing the minister to show his verbal superiority quite clearly to all. I also previously showed how central the role of covert dealings is within the episode. Politicians that rise to prominent positions are shown as getting there by the grace of the civil service officials who are in fact the ones holding all the manipulative power in government. Sir Humphrey is very precise about this in a scene in which Sir Humphrey asks Sir Arnold who he thinks the next Prime Minister should be. In itself this would not indicate that Sir Arnold would have any real say in the matter and could be interpreted as a mere inquiry as to his opinions on the matter, but combined with the rest of the scene it is apparent a decision was in fact being sought. The issue the civil service seems to have with the candidates is indicated by Sir Humphrey when he says: "The trouble is they're both interventionists. They'd both have foolish notions about running the country themselves if they became Prime Minister."<sup>148</sup> The civil services' views on the characteristics of an appropriate candidate are summed up by two of the most senior civil service officials, Sir Humphrey and Sir Arnold in the dialogue they have, considering who they should place as the next Prime Minister. Possible candidates are considered by the two and it is even decided that the running candidates will be forced to resign later on in the episode. The two list the characteristics of an appropriate candidate in turns, indicating like-mindedness between the two and enforcing the image that this is a civil service standard requirement for a higher level politician.

**Transcript 8:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 26.12 – 26.33.

- 1 AR So we're looking for a compromise candidate.
- 2 HA Malleable.
- 3 AR Flexible.
- 4 HA Likable.
- 5 AR No firm opinions.
- 6 HA No bright ideas.
- 7 AR Not intellectually committed.
- 8 HA Without the strength of purpose to change anything.
- 9 AR Someone who you know can be manipula-... professionally guided.
- 10 HA And leave the business of government in the hands of the experts.

The whole scene ties in with the power discourse, but demonstrates the distortion of what people expect of politicians and the type of people that actually get the appointments. Also, it demonstrates

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<sup>148</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 25.54 - 26.00.

where the real power of political decisions lies and it is indeed not with the elected officials, indicating a failure of democracy in establishing the rulers the people want. Sir Arnold even makes it quite clear that the person will be manipulated to doing what the civil service wants by almost saying it out loud directly. Sir Humphrey isn't as diplomatic in his comment but quite clearly takes the role of running the government away from the politicians and places it presumably in the hands of the civil service. Any politician who tries to reform the system is therefore likely to be simply swept aside and room made for a more suitable one. Being original and wanting change becomes futile and the episode even indicates that politicians themselves have no desire to be novel and creative. Creativity and change always requires a strong and courageous individual who isn't afraid to face opposition. As in the properness discourse it was shown, politicians in the episode attempt to maximize their popularity and not provoke the electorate. The irony is that many of the voters expect change when a new government is elected, yet no change occurs. The episode indicates that this is due to a reigning acceptance by the electorate that politicians won't keep their campaign promises once elected to office.<sup>149</sup> This in turn is shown as having led to an environment of government where politicians simply cower before any serious decision and avoid making the slightest attempt to be courageous, as Jim Hacker demonstrates when he tries to squeal out of the plot to replace the two candidates for Prime Minister when he realizes he must face them, but ultimately is convinced by Sir Humphrey's argument that the alternative would be an even more courageous move.<sup>150</sup>

The futility of governance is not merely limited to the state actor in the episode. Indeed, the episode makes specific reference to the futility of the way the EEC is run.

**Transcript 9:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 29.17 -29.43.

- 1 JH The waste of it all. Take that EEC reception last night. Humphrey introduced me to an official who spends his entire time paying a lot of farmers to produce masses of surplus food and then he introduced me to another official who spends all of his time paying a lot of others to destroy the surpluses. And then they pay thousands of bureaucrats to push masses of pieces of paper around to make it all work. Doesn't the futility of it all depress you Bernard?
- 2 BW Not really Minister. I'm a civil servant.

While Jim Hacker's argument of the futility of the EEC could be taken as a criticism towards the EEC in general, Bernard Woolley's response equates an international institution to a large extent with the state. His comment indicates that civil servants are like-minded in both and they function equally inefficiently, yet any attempted reform is quashed, as was previously mentioned. This

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<sup>149</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 30.03-30.11.

<sup>150</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 41.14-42.34.

means the criticism is not directed towards only the international institution of the EEC but equally on national government, fitting squarely within the ineptitude discourse. This short dialogue does however emphasize once again the equal role of an institution with that of a state. A theme that has been carried through the other discourses as well.

The audience might console themselves to thinking the episode indicates that what is happening with the inept politicians and corrupt civil service is something unique to the circumstances it describes. However, the episode would have the audience believe this has been so before and nothing of tremendous importance has changed or will change. It accomplishes this by making several references to tradition and how similar situations have been dealt with in the past. As a direct example, Sir Humphrey gives Jim Hacker advice on how to dodge questions by the press that might put an end to their covert dealings by stating that “[o]n previous occasions, the generally accepted answer...”<sup>151</sup> is what he proceeds to give. Bernard Woolley also indicates to Jim Hacker that “[a] bottle of champagne is the customary surprise.”<sup>152</sup> While these separate examples do not directly relate to persistence of bad government, but rather indicate a lack of creativity in the politicians, they are taken as indicative of strong traditions and repetitive customary behaviour patterns within the government. Since the audience equates their government as the representatives of the state in the international level, this gives the image that both on the national and international levels governments and states muddle on in a repetitive fashion despite their decision-makers’ own inclinations and ineptitude. The world cannot then be one where collective ideas shape reality and are subject to constant change, for surely these changes would have already occurred, or some small allowance would be made for such a change to take place. Instead the world is indicated as being driven by some forces foreign to the ideas and beliefs of individuals or even governments. This would indicate a strong materialist assumption in the ineptitude discourse.

#### **6.1.4 Nationalist discourse**

The final discourse present in the episode that was identified is one that depicts politicians creating a feeling of national identity for the British people through populist policies, yet not truly believing in them themselves. The British people are shown as markedly different from the other nations in public, but in private it is admitted that the British government is guilty of being as lazy and incapable as other nations. The characters are shown as having a strong love for their nation and its position in the world at least in public, but behind closed doors their true intentions are made

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<sup>151</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 40.31 - 40.34.

<sup>152</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 04.13 - 04.15.

apparent. This discourse is however the least present of the four that were identified and must be deduced from far less direct indications within the other discourses and transcripts.

The main way in which the nationalist discourse presents itself is by the choosing of words to discuss different international issues. Jim Hacker often uses the terms ‘us’ and ‘we’ to indicate the British state and its people in a form of camaraderie, whereas ‘they’ and ‘them’ to indicate others and build on a feeling of otherness. The same is true for the other main characters when they discuss any international event or situation. This is mild in itself, but combined with scenes where the foreign ‘other’ is said to force the brotherly ‘us’ to do something, like accept the changing of the name of a sausage, then the foreign ‘other’ not only becomes more distant and strange, but is also vilified. The episode does attempt to balance out this vilification by making it clear that the traditions and customs reigning in Great Britain might not be the best and most desirable in the world, as is made apparent when Jim Hacker reads out what the British sausage is made of and feels visibly ill.<sup>153</sup> Here is also one part where the nationalist discourse ties in with the power discourse. Despite the politician admitting something may be wrong with the traditions of the nation, he stand up proudly in front of the people claiming exactly the opposite of which he knows is true. He does this for personal gain, but the way he does it is by inciting the listeners to his speech into a nationalistic frenzy.

**Transcript 10:** YPM – Party Games, 1984, 53.22–55.09.

- 1 JH I am a good European. I believe in the European ideal. Never again shall we repeat the bloodshed of the two world wars. Europe is here to stay, BUT, this does not mean that we have to bow the knee to every directive from every little bureaucratic Bonaparte in Brussels. We are a sovereign nation still. We are British and proud of it. ((clapping)) We have made enough concessions to the European commissar for agriculture and when I say commissar, I use the word advisedly. We’ve swallowed the wineleg, we’ve swallowed the butter mount, watched out French friends beating up British lorry drivers carrying good British lamb to the French public. We have bowed, scraped, doffed our caps, tucked our forelocks and turned the other cheek, but I say enough {bangs fist on podium} is enough! ((clapping)) The Europeans have gone too far. They are now threatening the British sausage. They want it standardized by which they will force the British people to eat salami and bratwurst and other garlic ridden greasy foods that are alien to the British way of life. Do you want to eat salami for breakfast with your eggs and bacon? I don’t, and I won’t. ((clapping)) They turned our pints into litres and our yards into meters. We gave up the tanner, the threatening bit, the two bob piece, but they cannot and they will not destroy the British sausage. ((clapping)) Not while I’m here ((clapping)) In the words of Martin Luther, here I stand. {sits down}

The speech scene is one of the few in the entire series which are filmed out-of-studio and using all the methods which were mentioned before to create the illusion of reality. Even camera crews are shown in the scene recording the Minister’s speech, adding to the image that this the way we normally see politicians and get to interact with them. Combining the scene with the background

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<sup>153</sup> YPM – Party Games, 1984, 02.45-03.08.

dealings the episode has shown us, the message is clear. Politicians use the media unscrupulously to further their own goals. The methods and rhetoric they choose to use may be very populist even call forth nationalist rhetorical tools. No matter how devoted to one's country a politician seems, he is ultimately after personal gain. Of course, this ties the scene clearly to the power discourse as well, but the methods being employed are belonging to a strong nationalist rhetoric. The nationalist discourse can in fact be considered as being a good example of a satire showing something beyond the façade of public politics and unmasking the spectacle that is nationalism. The nationalist discourse does not therefore build a nationalist identity in itself. Instead it is a criticism of nationalism and exposes it as merely a political tool reign in the masses.

Since the primary concern in the nationalist discourse is with ideas and views that the electorate hold about the politicians, then it might be safe to say that the nationalist discourse holds a strong idealist view of the world. On the other hand, the reason for using such methods is ultimately based on a desire for power, something which is seen as traditionally indicative of a materialist concept of the world. I conclude that there are arguments on both sides, but since the whole nationalist discourse can, if one wanted be subjugated to the power discourse, then the materialist view comes out strongest.

What is clear is that the pressure of office is present even in this discourse. Politicians would not need to succumb to such rhetorical tactics as nationalism and populism if the electorate did not expect them to behave in such a manner. After all, the episode demonstrates that the politician doesn't even believe in the things he is saying. Quite the opposite in some occasions as is the case with the sausage incident. This would indicate that the nationalist discourse shows structural power to exist within the government and can therefore be taken as evidence of structuralist tendencies rather than individualist ones within the Y-axis of our theoretical framework.

## ***6.2 Following suite, yet being novel***

The pilot episode set the characters and their roles for the duration of the series. The argument for dwelling in depth into the manners and characteristics they demonstrated was that it leads the audience to believing similar manners are displayed at all levels of the characters' interactions. Hence, tendencies demonstrated at the local party level would be assumed as existing even at national government level or the international level. This projection through various levels can be seen as being due to the characteristic requirement of a sitcom for predictability. It is the same requirement which also makes the characteristics reappear throughout the series, making the task of

transcribing detailed examples of already established discourses a repetitive task that doesn't further the goal of this thesis.

To avoid repetition and insignificant analysis which merely repeats the already stated, I take three of the four previously described discourses and deal with them all, under one heading and less extensively than could be done should every episode be expanded upon from in full. The fourth, the power discourse, is expanded upon normally because of its significance for International Relations, which will be explained further in the part dealing with that discourse. The analysis from this point forward will also be more clearly directed to the elements of the discourses directly related to International Relations studies and the international field in general. This is because the entirety of the series gives a much larger repertoire of examples and material that directly deals with these issues, so there is no need to interpret or transmit the examples of the personal or national level, in the same extent as was done with the pilot episode, in order to gain an idea of what the discourse is about at the international one.

In addition to the previously discussed and presented discourses, the series introduces two novel ones which are dealt with each separately. The first deals with a fear of change that was already hinted at in the ineptitude discourse of the pilot episode. I have named this the conservative discourse. The second is one that emphasizes the costs of every decision and idea that is presented. I have called this the economic discourse.

The presence of episodes that directly deal with international affairs and the questions International Relations are mostly concerned with as a science, makes it possible to concentrate the analytic efforts to these. This is not to say that the other episodes have not been analysed, but that their contribution to this thesis would be minimal. All episodes were analysed in a similar fashion, but only the most relevant ones will be mentioned in this thesis. No contradiction between the discourses presented in the episodes of interest to International Relations and, those dealing mainly with issues of Political Science, was found. The prior are merely more aptly suited to give examples in a thesis of International Relations than the latter.

As an example of how the episodes to be dealt with were chosen, in the second season of YPM, the episodes mainly deal with national affairs. And while these can be expanded to reflect upon the international, thanks to the predictability requirement, it isn't necessary, for the season also provides us with two episodes that directly deal with matters of International Politics, namely the episodes 'A Diplomatic Incident' and 'Man Overboard' concerning mainly the properness and power discourses respectively. There are a further two episodes that relocate a national affair into the real

of the international themselves, without need of the analyst to do so, namely ‘The Patron of the Arts’ and ‘A Conflict of Interest’ chiefly concerning the economic and economic discourses respectively. In addition, the episode ‘Power to the People’ is such a good demonstration of the ineptitude discourse that it also dealt with in the following analysis, albeit shortly. The same is true of the episode ‘The Key’, which demonstrates an attempt at development in the narrative of the series and the episode ‘The Tangled Web’ which forms the conclusion of the storyline. The last two relate, not so much to demonstrating the discourses themselves, but to developing the story and demonstrating how a long-lasting sitcom like YPM can easily be considered a narrative that complies with the plot structures and narrative types inherent to a comedy. In the first season, there are slightly more episodes dealing directly with significant issues to International Relations. These are ‘The Grand Design’, ‘A Victory for Democracy’, ‘The Bishops Gambit’ and ‘One of Us’ demonstrating to a large extent the all of the discourses present in the series. The rest of the episodes also give wonderful examples for these, but would not be concerned with the realm of the international to any significant extent.

### **6.2.1 Properness, ineptitude and nationalism discourses**

The three discourses that are sufficiently elaborated upon in the pilot episode are the properness, ineptitude and nationalism discourses. The rest of the series mostly gives a growing number of examples for each of these. Some of the examples do fit into the International Relations better than previously mentioned ones. There are, however, a few cases in which the actual discourses are developed a bit further. After all, the main characters now each occupy a new position that sets new requirements and demands upon them, but also allows them new opportunities to re-establish their characters’.

While investigating the power discourse, I will show how the episode ‘A Victory for Democracy’ demonstrates that the commonwealth collective of states has codes of conduct that can supersede economic arguments, thus pointing towards the existence of real normative power in the international field. The reason for pointing it out already here is that the existence of normative power also has a strong linkage to the properness discourse. While it is a form of power exerted on the state and its actors, it is also a collection of norms and expectations towards the conduct of the states. States are expected to behave in certain forms and must conform to keeping up appearances; else they loose their image and reputation and possibly even economic status. This thought fits squarely within the properness discourse. It will be shown under the power discourse how the Prime Minister is concerned with how a US led invasion of a commonwealth country would be detrimental to his image in the episode “A Victory for Democracy”. YPM, however makes the

importance of image for states and their leaders apparent in other episodes as well. A constant fear that the Prime Minister from both the international and national levels is one of being labelled a racist, most likely because of the strong attention Apartheid was getting in South Africa at the time.<sup>154</sup> The Prime Minister has to refrain in his from saying English is a more important language than Hindi to be taught in British schools.<sup>155</sup> On a side note, this brief comment also shows how globalized Great Britain has become, since it is necessary to even discuss about the level of Hindi teaching in the country, placing the concept of a nation state in question. Returning to the properness discourse, the theme of racism at the international level as something to be avoided is addressed in the episode “A Conflict of Interest”. The Prime Minister is considering appointing a new head to the Bank of England who would reputedly get to the root of a large scale scandal that was going on there. A large part of the scandal is that a bank under the supervision of the Bank of England has lent large sums of money, without proper background checks to people that can’t pay them back. These people include the President of Buranda and the Chairman of the Burandan enterprise corporation. The Burandan High Commissioner (HC) is discussing the effects of a cleanup.

**Transcript 11:** YPM – The National Education Service, 1987, 25.58-26.30.

- 1 HC If you attack these loans the President of Buranda will have no option but to interpret this move as a hostile and racist act.
- 2 JH Racist? {high pitched voice and surprised look}
- 3 HC Of course!
- 4 JH But I have no intention of attacking the President per se. I would merely...
- 5 HA Say that he was someone of dubious repute.
- 6 JH Yes. ... No, no, no. I- I- wouldn't-
- 7 HC May I further point out that a racist attack on our president would undoubtedly create solidarity and support from all the other African states.
- 8 HA °Commonwealth countries Prime Minister.°

The scene clearly indicates the importance of not appearing racist at any level. Slightly later in the scene both Sir Humphrey and the Prime Minister affirm that the Commonwealth form a sort of a club with its own rules and etiquette. Breaking these rules and etiquette by e.g. being branded a racist can have serious consequences, as the above dialogue shows. The statement that countries can form such clubs of course ties the properness discourse to the power discourse in as much as these rules indicate some pressure to act in a certain manner. As can be understood from the description, the episode deals with financial matters to a large extent, but since I have taken the economic

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<sup>154</sup> The reason for this deduction is that the only time South Africa is mentioned in the series and as a problem (episode “A Diplomatic Incident”) the immediate response by a secondary official is to ask whether it is because of human rights? The series makes no comment on the human rights issues of any other real nation throughout (Qumran being the fictional one in the episode “The Bishop’s Gambit”).

<sup>155</sup> YPM – The National Education Service, 1988, 02.25-02.38.

discourse as its own chapter, the interpretation of this and other similar episodes will be dealt with there. For now suffice it to state that the properness discourse, which is being dealt with here, would indicate the effect of structure to not be negligible in the deliberations of either national, or international politics.

The ineptitude of high-level politicians is expanded upon and extended as to remove doubt whether only the British politicians could demonstrate such characteristics. This is done by drawing parallels in behaviour and manner between the Prime Minister and his counterparts, a good example of which is when he describes his first visit to the United States to both Sir Humphrey and subsequently to Bernard Woolley.<sup>156</sup> Another example is given when the Prime Minister meets the president of France, who clearly states his government's constant lack of knowledge as to what French security is up to.<sup>157</sup> As for the other characteristics apart from ineptitude of the leaders of various countries, similarities are drawn between these as well. Political leaders of all countries are shown as concerned with personal gain and corrupt dealings rather than with the good of the nation. This argument is however more suited to the power discourse, but it does demonstrate the failure of political leaders. No differentiation is made between democratically elected leaders and leaders that rise to power through a coup d'état, as is demonstrated in the episode where the leader of Buranda<sup>158</sup> is stated as being someone of 'doubtful repute'.<sup>159</sup> The corrupt and self serving ways of Jim Hacker are shown throughout the series in much the same way they were in the pilot episode.

A further interesting development to the ineptitude discourse is that in the actual series, ineptitude is made almost acceptable from the senior members of government, namely the Prime Minister and people in similar offices. The political positions are stated as being mostly for show, while true decisions of government "...are nearly always completed in advance [of meetings between politicians] by humble servants such as..."<sup>160</sup> members of the civil service, even at the international level. Bernard Woolley also makes it clear that not much is demanded of the Prime Minister as his job is mostly ceremonial with only very few duties befalling him, but any number of things he could do.<sup>161</sup> With concern to foreign affairs what is expected of politicians is clearly stated by the Secretary for foreign affairs as the need to confine themselves to "...the hospitality and ceremonial role"<sup>162</sup>. It is not only within government that the series portrays a lack of interest to real change,

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<sup>156</sup> YPM – The Ministerial Broadcast, 1986, 01.16-01.46 & 04.06-04.26.

<sup>157</sup> YPM – A Diplomatic Incident, 1986, 26.05-26.20.

<sup>158</sup> A fictional nation in Western Africa from the episode 'A Conflict of Interest'. Already introduced in the Yes Minister series, where the background of the president's rise to power is explained.

<sup>159</sup> YPM – A Conflict of Interest

<sup>160</sup> YPM – The Ministerial Broadcast, 1986, 01.38-01.41.

<sup>161</sup> YPM – The Ministerial Broadcast, 1986, 02.35-03.30.

<sup>162</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 04.53-05.02.

but also from the people themselves. The voters are shown to be disinterested in government and politics, allowing for the inept behaviour of the politicians. Even at the scale of international politics the popular media is shown to demonstrate little interest in politics, and even to trivialize it when it does show interest in it. As was claimed previously in this thesis, media forms the primary link between politics and the voters in today's world, giving the media's choices a large role to play in what issues are considered of importance. This tendency of trivialization in the popular media is shown throughout the series, so it cannot be considered a reaction by the creators to any particular event, but should be taken as a portrayal of a tendency of media at the period of airing. Good examples are from the episodes 'One of Us' and '. In the first the political discussion of controlling defence expenditure in the realm is completely suppressed by the story of a lost dog in an artillery range and Jim Hacker expresses it to be typical of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4<sup>163</sup> to not give politics their due importance.<sup>164</sup> From an international standpoint there is a similar example in the episode 'Official Secrets', where the Prime Minister's accomplishments in obtaining promising results for a détente with the Soviets got no media attention, whereas a scandal concerning the memoirs of the previous prime minister a week later is all over the media and has even received interest from foreign media with the magazine *Le Monde* from France getting separately mentioned.<sup>165</sup> Since the media, and consequently the voters show little to no interest in actual politics, the politicians are left to freely do as they please, eliminating much of the requirement for capacity, or the guilt for ineptitude from them. Blame for the failure of government is shifted partly to the people themselves and the structural pressure on officials and politicians relieved.

In the pilot episode I made reference to the ineptitude discourse as demonstrating the failure of democracy in as much as the elected people don't have the power to actually do anything or bring forth change. In the actual series the episode 'Power to the People' expands on this idea very directly to include that not only are the elected politicians without power, they are also not actually the best candidates from the point of view of the people. The gap between the ordinary voter and a politician is shown to be so large that not only does the voter not know what the person they are voting for is like, the politician has no real idea what the voter wants. The only meaningful contact between the voter and the politician is shown to be the party and the pressure it manifests upon the politicians on the one hand and the promises it makes to the voters on the other. Of course, the same discourse is present throughout the series, but this episode is the most direct exemplar of the failure of democracy. The way the episode brings this forth is by having the Prime Minister and his

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<sup>163</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Independent Television (ITV) and Channel 4 represent all of the television services in the United Kingdom at the time of airing in both the public and private domains.

<sup>164</sup> YPM – One of Us, 1984, 00.49-02.25.

<sup>165</sup> YPM – Official Secrets, 1986, 06.04 – 06.14.

Political Adviser plan a new reform to the voting system in Great Britain that would return power over government in a large extent to the people. Naturally the civil service objects to this. The following transcript between Sir Humphrey and Bernard Woolley shows the failure of commonsense democracy quite clearly and is echoed in other parts of the episode as well.

**Transcript 12:** YPM – Power to the People, 1987, 15.56-16.45.

- 1 HA Bernard, if the right people don't have power, do you know what happens? The WRONG people get it. Politicians, councillors, ordinary voters.
- 2 BW But aren't they supposed to in a democracy?
- 3 HA This is a British democracy Bernard.
- 4 BW How do you mean?
- 5 HA British democracy recognizes that you need a system to protect the important things of life and keep them out of the hands of the barbarians. {Stands up and walks about the room}(3.0) Things like the opera, radio three, the countryside, the law, the universities, both of them. And we are that system.

The episode ends with neither the Prime Minister, nor his Political Adviser actually wishing for change to occur, since it would eliminate career politicians as such, at least if they planned to ever make some unpopular legislation, by making them truly accountable to the voters. This partly exonerates the civil service from being the only obstacle to any change and reform that would introduce true democracy into government but brings forth the argument change may in fact be impossible if all levels of government oppose it. The need for a system of control that is shared and understood by all characters in the end of the episode indicates that at least in the national level structure is seen as important. The transcript also points to the properness discourse and power discourses as it shows once again the power behind the throne to lie with the civil service, a competition for decisive power and a need for maintaining appearances by listing the items to be maintained as things that create a certain image of the country. In this sense the episode displays idealist tendencies, unlike in the pilot episode, for the importance given to e.g. the opera or the countryside is nowhere mentioned as anything else than ceremonial. If they are to be maintained, it is because of some importance they have in creating an image or idea of Great Britain as a cultured, pastoral and educated place. Though this image is presented in the episode as being for the British people, it can easily be seen to be also for the foreign nations to see, linking the episodes discourses with the international arena.

As Prime Minister, Jim Hacker maintains for most of the series the role of being manipulated by the civil service and particularly Sir Humphrey, but he is shown as resisting Sir Humphreys machinations as the series progresses. He even manages to assert his power over Sir Humphrey by

threatening his position as head of the civil service in the episode ‘The Key’.<sup>166</sup> The fact that this idea came from another member of the civil service does however square off any claim to capacity the previously mentioned build-up of character could have accomplished. The Prime Minister also attempts to make decisions contrary to Sir Humphreys wishes and even succeeds on occasion, such as in the episode ‘A Victory for Democracy’ when he sends troops to St. George’s Island<sup>167</sup>, but again, only after receiving advice from another. A further example is in the episode ‘A Patron of the Arts’ where he again succeeds in getting his wish despite Sir Humphrey, but thanks to the advice and thinking of his Political Advisor, Mrs. Wainwright. This means the protagonist of our comic plot fails time and time again to break the status quo of power between him and his antagonist, despite an ever increasing frequency in attempts to do so. That is to say, until the final episode of the series, ‘The Tangled Web’ in which he obtains concrete evidence of Sir Humphrey’s indiscretion and in fact forces him to comply with Jim Hacker’s own goals. This can be seen as the final victory of the protagonist over the antagonist. A new and more harmonious state is achieved once everyone finds their place in government and their places and status’ comply with the public’s expectations. The audience rests assured that there is hope for the politicians to grow a backbone and the civil service to have their power taken back to where it should be, despite the clearly present problems. In this way the series serves its function as a satire of defusing tensions in the public up to very last episode. It also complies with a comedy’s need to achieve a change towards harmony from a state of disharmony, although not to too high a level, else it would be an epic.

The least developed discourse in the series is the nationalist discourse. Nationalist feeling is shown as being used by the politicians in much the same way as in the pilot episode to achieve both national and international goals. The role of such argumentation is however always shown as being among the last resorts the politicians succumb to, when all other means of persuasion have been exhausted. This would indicate that nationalism as a policy tool is not on par with economic or power arguments. E.g. in the episode “A Diplomatic Incident” the Prime Minister only mentions the pride of the British people at the end of the episode when all other forms to persuade the French had been used. Also, in the episode “A Conflict of Interest” the political advisor of the Prime Minister only suggests appealing to nationalist feeling if no other good news can be found to be inserted into the Prime Minister’s speech. This was however already made clear both in the international and national levels in the pilot episode and hence the rest of the series makes no contribution to furthering the nationalist discourse. It only affirms the discourse by showing more examples of it throughout.

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<sup>166</sup> YPM – The Key, 1986, 09.30-09.59.

<sup>167</sup> An fictional island in the Northern Indian Ocean, referred to in the episode ‘A Victory For Democracy’.

## 6.2.2 Power discourse

The power discourse has been taken apart from the previously mentioned three, despite being dealt with in the previous chapter. This is because it plays a very central role in the actual episodes of YPM and is of great significance in understanding how the series portrays the world and which theory would best suit this view. After all, next to all theories admit that power is important, not merely the realists who are most commonly associated with this thought. The distinguishing matter is the type of power each theory considers significant. In other words, theories can be differentiated according to how they view power to be constituted, not so much by do they think power is important. Thus, understanding the nature of the power discourse within the series can help us narrow down the potential explanative theories of International Relations to a great degree and justifies a more thorough investigation. It precisely towards this deeper understanding of the constitution of power, that the actual series gives us new information.<sup>168</sup>

While discussing the ineptitude discourse it was mentioned that a détente with the Soviets is portrayed as an accomplishment that should get its due merit in the media, but fails to do so. This is a carrying theme in the second season of the series which sees a shift from portraying the Soviets as opponents or competitors – in the first season - to a more amiable approach towards them. During the first season of YPM the defence of the realm referenced as being planned against a Soviet attack. This is set up from the very first episode, where Great Britain’s nuclear arsenal is compared only to the Soviet equivalent<sup>169</sup> and the possibility of a nuclear war is envisioned only from a Soviet attack’s perspective.<sup>170</sup> This can be understood since all other nuclear powers at the time of airing were members of the same defence pact, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but that does not explain why also conventional forces are compared to the Soviet Union’s capacity.<sup>171</sup> In fact the image of the power division within the world is one of bipolarity, with the Soviet Union on the one side and everyone else on the other. It is also one of hegemony. The Soviet Union is shown to have complete hegemony over its pole, whereas the NATO pole is dispersed and unprofessional. NATO members, including the United States are illustrated as taking their military duties anything but seriously or professionally, but as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, no such commentary is made.<sup>172</sup> The Soviet Union and its intelligence network and military capacity is made to appear highly efficient throughout the series, most probably to maintain a sense of juxtaposition between the Soviet ‘them’ and the western ‘us’. Several direct mentions of their

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<sup>168</sup> Wendt, 1999, pp. 96-97.

<sup>169</sup> YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 0302 – 03.24.

<sup>170</sup> YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 08.16 – 09.00.

<sup>171</sup> YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 03.37 – 03.43.

<sup>172</sup> YPM – The Grand Design, 1986, 04.24 – 05.00.

efficiency are made and it is even admitted by the head of the British Security Service – MI5 - when Sir Humphrey is suspected of having been a spy, that the British government had so many spies that one more hardly mattered.<sup>173</sup> This is however, at the same time a concession to admitting a feeling of Great Britain being subordinate to the Soviet Union and placing them in an underdog status. It also ties the discussion of bipolarity concretely with the ineptitude discourse by pointing out the lack of capacity in the British government with concern to security issues, at least when compared with the Soviet Union.

The change with respect to the portrayal of the Soviet Union happens in the second season. From very early in the season, two consecutive episodes are presented in which the Soviet Union is shown to be more than merely an abstract threat. The first is the second episode of the season ‘Official Secrets’ where a détente with the Soviets is mentioned as being in the works. This was already mentioned with respect to the ineptitude discourse, but bears significance here as well. A potential détente indicates coming to some form alleviated international power distribution between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, a détente cannot be accomplished without accepting that the partner can at least be considered reasonable, thus de-demonizing much of the image placed upon the Soviets. The following episode ‘A Diplomatic Incident’ gives a face to the Soviet Union by introducing the Soviet ambassador. Until this episode, no representative of the Soviet Union was ever shown. Instead of continuing with the created image of an all-capable nation, the Soviet ambassador is portrayed as just one more of the incompetent political characters that constantly fumble and find themselves in embarrassing situations, albeit shortly presented.<sup>174</sup> This humanizes the previously so feared and even exalted Soviets. This alleviation of tensions with the Soviet Union is emphasized by the consecutiveness of the episodes and no strong emphasis on the Soviet threat is placed in even the following ones. It is, however still made clear that the national defence of Britain is primarily aimed at defending against the Soviet Union. However, this statement is only mentioned in passing and with the Prime Minister being portrayed as being under pressure, so it doesn’t bear as much weight as the extensively discussed Soviet threat in season one.<sup>175</sup> The same form of passing sentence can be found as being stated by Bernard Woolley when asked by Sir Humphrey in the second to last episode of YPM ‘The National Education Service’ if he has been got at by the enemy.<sup>176</sup> Bernard simply asks if Sir Humphrey means the Russians, but is swiftly corrected that in fact Sir Humphrey meant Dorothy Wainwright. Again, this is more of a secondary comment that is not affirmed by a continued dialogue. Neither of the two episodes has

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<sup>173</sup> YPM – One of Us, 1986, 04.05 – 04.16.

<sup>174</sup> YPM – A Diplomatic Incident, 1987, 22.45-23.10.

<sup>175</sup> YPM – The Patron of the Arts, 1987, 17.54-17.57.

<sup>176</sup> YPM – The National Education Service, 1988, 03.56-04.07.

any further international bearing than these side comments, so their significance is even further delegated the role of merely demonstrating presumptions and past tendencies of thought.

Historical reasons for such a shift can be seen as the rise to power by Michael Gorbachev in 1985. Many of the main Politburo figures that were seen as holding back the development of the Soviet Union had changed when they became simply too old and began worrying more about health and retirement issues than the state, thus rejuvenating the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev emphasized foreign relations in his policies as a vehicle for change in the Soviet Union. An important goal of his was to open up the Soviet Union by allowing an exchange of ideas and thoughts between Soviets and foreigners, a dramatic change when compared with the long lasting xenophobic regimes before his time. Of course Western nations would not immediately react with openness and trust towards such changes, but would rather maintain a certain form of scepticism until they were convinced of true change. This can explain YPM's careful way of humanizing the Soviets and de-escalating the Soviet threat, while at the same time reminding in side-comments about their enmity. Apart from political changes in the Soviet leadership and foreign policy, another reason for the change in portrayal of the Soviet Union can be found to lie with the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986. This raised international sympathy for the Soviet Union. Interestingly though, it is not mentioned or alluded to in any of the episodes. A reason for this can be thought to be the type of series YPM is. As a satire it regularly ridicules real world events, but large scale disasters are not seen as something appropriate to ridicule. The Chernobyl disaster also changed Soviet internal and external policies by introducing Glasnost, the practice of discussing publicly any contentious issues, and by changing the Soviet stance on nuclear weapons. This further demonstrates how the series reacted to international changes and serves as a portrayal of reigning attitudes and thoughts, while at the same time influencing its audience to think of world affairs in a certain light, another example of which can be found in the following analysis of the episode "A Victory for Democracy".<sup>177</sup>

The previously mentioned failure to take sides with concern to what kind of government – dictatorship or democracy – is indicated not only with respect to both possessing inept leaders, as was stated in the previous chapter. In fact the series gives the impression that the form of government a nation possesses is of little to no importance. All governments are shown to pursue like-minded goals and possess similar offices irrespective of their mode of government. The inept leadership mentioned above was one example. Another one demonstrating the insignificance of the mode of government can be grasped from the episode "A Victory for Democracy" where a state

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<sup>177</sup> Zubok, 2007, pp. 277-289.

called St. George's Island is under threat of a Marxist coup d'état, alluding quite strongly to the actual invasion of Grenada, a commonwealth realm, by the United States in 1983.

In the YPM episode, Sir Humphrey and Dick, the Secretary for the foreign office, are discussing the matter and realize the nation might lose a large contract if they back the wrong side. The foreign office has decided to not take sides to avoid this to which Sir Humphrey's response is very clear: "We don't mind which side wins, the democrats or the Marxists"<sup>178</sup>, to which Dick responds affirmatively "Why should we?"<sup>179</sup>. Interestingly the fact that St. George's Island is a part of the Commonwealth plays no significant role in the deliberations as to its future, indicating that Great Britain at least will primarily seek to further its own agenda even at the despair of others if the officials get their way. This is also but one of the ways in which the episode "A Victory for Democracy" can be seen as a critique of Great Britain's behaviour in the actual events surrounding the US invasion of Grenada in 1983. In 1979 Maurice Bishop had led his party to forcefully seize power from the democratically elected Eric Gairy in Grenada and began shifting its political alignment to the left. Many nations, including Great Britain recognized the new government, despite the way in which they came to power.<sup>180</sup>

A similar example of inaction and insignificance of institutions such as the Commonwealth, or nationality can be found in the episode "The Bishop's Gambit". In it a British national is to be flogged in the imaginary Arab state of Qumran. The episode makes reference to the fact that upsetting the Qumranies would be a bad idea because of economic and military reasons, despite the perceived moral duty to help the British national that will suffer a barbaric fate for a, from the British point of view, trivial offence. Sir Humphrey corrects the Prime Minister as to the role of the foreign office. It is not to protect British nationals, but to protect British interest, clearly marking the self interested view of the state.<sup>181</sup>

This disinterest with forms of government indicates the series doesn't take a stand as to which form of government is more prone to produce a better functioning order, but all forms are seen as quite equal. This can only be true if we consider nations to be run by some concrete forces that compel them to act in a similar manner irrespective of the ideological standpoints of their leaders. Economic and power concerns rise to the forefront when dealing with international affairs. This also indicates a lack of solidarity and camaraderie to be shown to exist between nations, as international relations are shown to be directed by self interest rather than any normative ideals.

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<sup>178</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 03.59-04.01.

<sup>179</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 04.03-04.04.

<sup>180</sup> Waters, 1986, p. 229.

<sup>181</sup> YPM – The Bishop's Gambit, 1986, 02.03-02.07.

One form of power that is not directly mentioned, but referred to is normative power within the international system. States, or more precisely Great Britain, is shown to have certain international pressures to act in certain forms and avoid being seen as acting according to others. While sometimes this pressure can correlate with the direct power interests of the state, in other times the behaviour of the state may be motivated more by a need to behave properly in the international scene than by self interest. YPM shows this international pressure in several episodes, but the clearest example of a case where the state's interests do not dictate the actions the state takes is in the episode 'A Victory for Democracy'. It was previously mentioned that in the episode a Marxist takeover in St. George's Island would be just as acceptable to Great Britain as continuing with the democratic government there present. British interests would be met with either government in power so any action to attempt to influence the outcome could not be made on the basis of national interest. Despite government officials being against action, the Prime Minister decides to send in troops to defend the democratic government in St. George's Island after receiving advice from the Israeli ambassador (IA).

**Transcript 13:** YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 22.52

- 1 IA Israeli intelligence says that East Jemen are going to invade St. George's Island within the next few days.
- 2 JH What? So, that's the connection.
- 3 IA Your foreign office have agreed with East Jemen that they'll make strong diplomatic representations, but will do nothing. In return, the Jemenes people will let you keep your airport contract after they've taken over.
- 4 JH There'll be uproar!
- 5 IA Well that's only the start. I happen to know from our ambassador in Washington that the Americans are going to support the present government of St. George's.
- 6 JH You mean in the UN?
- 7 IA No::, in battle on St. George's Island. They'll send in an airborne division backed up by the seventh fleet.
- 8 JH The Americans invading a commonwealth country? The palace will hit the roof. And I shall look ridiculous.

It can be argued based on the dialogue that the primary motivation for the Prime Minister to react differently than his officials was the fear of an even worse outcome should the Americans get involved militarily. However, the reason for this concern lies not in the fear that Great Britain might suffer economically or militarily from this, but in the fact that St. George's Island is a part of the Commonwealth, a group of states with shared values and mutual understanding. It is the same duty to support one-another within the commonwealth that was forgone by the officials, which made the politician react to this crisis. In the actual case of the invasion of Grenada, Ms Margaret Thatcher claims to have warned the US President Mr Ronald Reagan before the actual invasion that military action could jeopardize British-US relations in issues such as cruise missile placement on British territories, since the people and the parliament would be likely to be less amiable to US requests

after the invasion of a commonwealth country by the US, no matter what type of government there is in power at that moment.<sup>182</sup>

In YPM, Great Britain has a moral duty to maintain the commonwealth and therefore complies with the unwritten norms of conduct within the commonwealth, avoiding antagonizing other nations, such as the United States. It should be emphasized that while Britain's actions may seem self serving, the case in point did not, as stated, threaten British interests, other than its prestige and credibility. These are of course of importance to a nation in the international field but many would argue they are subordinate to material forms of power such as economic and military power. The episode however shows the triumph of these normative forms of power over the material, albeit with strong opposition from the officials. One part of the government is therefore represented as thinking the decision of the Prime Minister is a bad one and one part thinks it's a good one. This shows the difficulty in comparing normative power with material power, but the ultimate choice to send troops in to stop a potential invasion, which the Prime Minister takes soon after the above transcript, indicates that at least on occasion normative reasons may prevail over other forms. Although most of the series concentrates on issues directly related to material power, the significance of normative power is made clear. Normative arguments cannot be overlooked either in the face of military or even economic reasons, although these may not be as common as material ones.

That having been stated, once normative arguments have been considered, they may be forgone. This can only be done however, in cases of extreme asymmetrical power divisions. In such cases normative arguments are shown as secondary to arguments about power. This is made clear from a brief statement by the Prime Minister in the same episode as above:

**Transcript 14:** YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 09.46-10.05

- 1 JH Humphrey, are you saying Britain should not support law and justice?
- 2 HA Of course we should Prime Minister. We just shouldn't let it affect our foreign policy.
- 3 JH We should always fight for the weak against the strong.
- 4 HA Well then, why don't we send troops to Afghanistan to fight the Russians?
- 5 JH The Russians are too strong.

While affirming the existence of normative power and the effect Britain as a member of the Western civilized states feels of that power, it at the same time clearly places limits on that power. When faced with unsurpassable pressure from a power perspective, normative arguments may be forgotten. The brief intercourse is also a good example of vilifying the Russians as an enemy,

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<sup>182</sup> Thatcher, 1993, p. 331.

without stating it outright. Reading further into the dialogue, or better said, out of it, we can find a relationship between the levels of effect that normative arguments have with respect to economic ones as well. Since power, economic and normative arguments are being compared in the episode, but only power is mentioned as superior to norms, it could be claimed that economic arguments are de facto indicated as subordinate to normative ones. After all, it is the succumbing to normative pressure that wins in the episode, with an exceptional case being put forth for power arguments and no such defence being made of the economic arguments.

### **6.2.3 Conservative discourse**

As was mentioned previously, a lack of change in government and its institutions was mentioned already in the pilot episode. Government is shown to be in a state of stagnation. In the actual series YPM this thought is expanded and extended from being merely a statement of matter of fact to one of active goal seeking and a purpose in itself. Change is shown as something which should be avoided, while in the pilot episode it was merely stated as a historical fact that it has been avoided. While in the pilot episode the magnitude of the dialogue discussing change did not merit being considered a separate discourse, in the episodes of YPM this theme is much more apparent. This can be considered quite a normal discourse for a comedy, making it no surprise to find it in YPM. After all, the comic plot is characterized by an attempt to achieve harmony from chaos, while facing constant pressure to maintain the disorganized present, or status quo.

The main force opposing any change is shown to come from the civil service. While in the pilot episode the civil service mentioned that the way things are done today is how they have been done in the past, in the episodes of YPM they actively try to avoid change. This is articulated in very clearly by the two most prominent members of the civil service, Sir Humphrey and Bernard Woolley, throughout the series, making it as clear as possible to the audience that from the perspective of the civil service, change is to be avoided. The consequence of making the avoidance of change a de facto aim of government officials is one of justifying inactivity also from the part of the politicians. Even the Prime Minister is shown to understand that officials won't help him bring about change if they can avoid it, as is evidenced from his conversation with his wife Annie in the episode "The Bishop's Gambit". In the scene Annie ask why the foreign office can't intervene on behalf of the British national being held in Qumran awaiting a flogging. The Prime Minister's response is defeatist in claiming that "The foreign office isn't there to do things. It's there to explain why things can't be done."<sup>183</sup> This short quip is stated in a scene that takes place in the Prime

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<sup>183</sup> YPM – The Bishop's Gambit, 1986, 14.33-14.37.

Minister's home, while he is not wearing a formal suit and when he is talking to his wife. All the above indicate to the audience that while the comment is clever and witty it contains an element of significant truth.

Translating the conservative discourse from merely being a goal of the civil service to the international field is to say that the series makes a strong argument for governments being status quo states, seeking to maintain the existing situation in world politics and power relations. While this could be discussed under the power discourse, it would leave out the emphasis on active status quo seeking that taking the conservative discourse as a separate one brings forth. It also puts into question the possibility of international institutions to effect positive change in the world. After all, as was discussed in with respect to the ineptitude discourse, the bureaucrat of international institutions are shown to share similar interests to those of national governments. Hence, if bureaucrats at the national level attempt to maintain a status quo, so will those working at the international level. The pilot episode dealt with the international institute of the EEC and how it was portrayed. The series itself shows that other international institutions are also bureaucratically run. A good example is the United Nations where the Prime Minister has very little power to influence what is done there, with the real power being in the hands of the civil service officials in the foreign office.<sup>184</sup> The United Nations is also put forward as little more than a forum for the international expression of hatred, not an institution for the promotion of a better world.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, just as satire and comedy serve to relieve tensions and treat anxieties within society, verbalizing such feelings serves the same purpose. This would mean the United Nations is shown to be an institute for promoting the status quo in the world by allowing countries to vent their anger in a peaceful manner.

Interestingly enough, the conservative discourse and its respective rhetoric is not employed within the series when a change which either increases the size or the wages of the civil service are proposed. This would indicate that the world tends with greater ease towards a bureaucratic and self serving direction than towards a more egalitarian one. In any case, the conservative discourse demonstrates the same brute force materialist assumptions that were mentioned while analysing the pilot episode. If things have always been done in a certain form and it is close to impossible to change them, then there must be something concrete that causes events to unfold as they do.

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<sup>184</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 22.17-22.31.

<sup>185</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 09.36-09.40.

## 6.2.4 Economic discourse

Throughout the series there is another discourse that presents itself both when dealing with the national level and the international. This is one where all decisions are subjugated to economic considerations. Economic considerations are shown to be at the root of most policy decisions and to contain the power to change the views and policies of government. Britain and all other states are shown to be a part of a global economy where no country can act fully independently with respect to economic affairs.

Earlier I mentioned and partly transcribed a scene where the High Commissioner for Buranda was discussing the effects of a potential cleanup of the Bank of England with the Prime Minister. The continuation of that dialogue serves as good example of the significance of economic arguments when dealing with international affairs.

**Transcript 11:** YPM – The National Education Service, 1987, 26.30-26.51.

- 1 HC We would move to have Britain expelled from the Commonwealth. ... Our president would be obliged to cancel her majesties state visit next month and Buranda would immediately sell all the government stock it has bought.
- 2 JH {to Sir Humphrey} Would that create a run on the pound?
- 3 HA Yes. {to the High Commissioner} Anything else?
- 4 JH {surprised} Isn't that enough?

The scene above had also a significant properness element prior to the economic argument being presented, but the economic argument illustrates some of the considerations nations must deal with when making foreign policy decision. The main concern for the Prime Minister from an economic perspective is not global welfare, but the stability of the British monetary system. However, due to the interconnectedness of economies and particularly within the commonwealth, the British monetary system is dependent on the policies of other nations as well.

The international interdependence of economies is demonstrated in other episodes as well, most clearly in the episode “A Victory for Democracy” where the Prime Minister fears that inaction in the case of St. George’s Island would cause a run on the pound, because the United States would begin taxing United States’ investment to Britain and putting tariffs on British exports to the United States.<sup>186</sup> This would be in the United States’ form of punishing Great Britain for allowing a communist takeover of the island, a supposedly significant strategic base. Much like the example above, this demonstrates how economic arguments supersede even strategic ones. It is apparent from the rest of the episode that there are other reasons why Britain should act to support the

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<sup>186</sup> YPM – A Victory for Democracy, 1986, 01.47-01.58.

present government of St. George's Island, but the underlying fear is an economic one. Consequently, as it was stated when discussing the power discourse, this leads the Prime Minister to follow a course of action that seems primarily to follow some normative requirement. But could it have been accomplished without the economic pressure is left unanswered. It is clear however that economic arguments are considered a force in themselves either directly or indirectly in YPM.

Interestingly costs are not an issue when the individuals stand to gain from increased public spending, such as when the aforementioned civil service pay rise is addressed or when the Prime Minister makes his first state visit to the United States and a great number of reporters wish to join in.<sup>187</sup> In both cases the costs are known to be high, but considered of secondary importance. While the first example is merely of personal gain, the latter of the state visit is more interesting. It can be interpreted from the perspective of personal gain and certainly there is a great element of that present, but the reasons why such a thing like a state visit's publicity is for personal gain is of more interest. It indicates the importance of image at an international level as being superior to economic arguments, indicating an idealist form of thought. This comparison has a strong tie in with the properness discourse, due to its concern with image, but the example illustrated more aptly an exceptional case where economic arguments fall as secondary to other forms.

The economic discourse has close ties to the power discourse and could be considered an internal discourse under the heading of power, as many times it is considered in traditional International Relations literature. After all, the level of economic power is what limits some actions and allows others. The constant struggle for more funds and savings indicates a persistent attempt to maximize this power. However, placing the economic discourse fully under the power discourse suffers from the same limiting phenomenon as the placing of the conservative discourse under the power discourse would have had. It would merely subjugate it to the role of a type of power. Identifying it as a separate discourse makes the complexities of thought more apparent and highlights the considerations that it encompasses. After all, as I have mentioned various times before, almost every discourse presented in this thesis can be seen to tie in with the power discourse in one form or another if one really wanted to.

There are several examples of scenes fitting the economic discourse at the level of national politics. Financial argumentation is shown to be superior in significance to issues such as image at the national level, health services, the educational system and even defence. But, because of this thesis

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<sup>187</sup> YPM – A Real Partnership, 1986 & The Grand Design, 1986

is primarily concerned with what the discourses tell us of the global and this could be demonstrated aptly with the examples above, the national level shall not be elaborated upon here.

## 7 Conclusions

At the onset of this thesis I was not sure whether or not YPM would demonstrate sufficient coherence with real world events to merit the status of significant satire. I began working on the thesis from a vague feeling that this would be the case. As the pre-analysis of the material progressed and the episodes were re-watched over and over it became clear that YPM exhibits all the characteristics of a comedy and satire, albeit one that has its dialogue in a slower pace than today's popular satiric series. YPM is from a pre-information-super-highway era, when one media company controlled the majority of British broadcasting. YPM succeeds in both disempowering the governmental elites by exposing their daily routines to ridicule, and in calming the audience by allowing them to vent their anxieties. This dual role, as well as its indirectness to deal with up-to-date events may have been necessary for the series to ever be produced. After all, it was produced by the governmental broadcasting company, the BBC. Taking all this into account, YPM shows how a comedy and satire can help us peel the curtain of that which is otherwise hidden to us and to expose the motivations by exaggeration and parody. In other words, I was very satisfied with the choice of material after analysing it. It may have proven more fruitful however to limit oneself to even less episodes than currently are analysed. This would have allowed more detailed analysis and examples of each discourse to be written within the constraints of an average master's thesis. As it now is, I feel a detailed analysis of the episodes would have expanded this thesis to at least four times its current length.

Before dwelling into the conclusions that can be drawn from each discourse that was analysed, it is worth mentioning a matter which was present throughout YPM and that will help locate a suitable theoretical framework to describe the series. This is the question of base units in international relations. There are several references in YPM to international organizations and national non-governmental organizations, but their role is seen secondary to that of the state. They exert pressure on the behaviour of states, but not in sufficient amounts to supersede the self serving charter that states and statesmen are shown to possess. Statesmen are shown as clearly differentiable from the state in terms of interests, but the pressure exerted on them through the office they hold and by the prospect of electoral loss is great enough to make sure their behaviour and actions are not merely a matter of their own whim when it comes to the international. Hence the series would indicate that states are to be considered the basic elements of international relations, allowing for the existence of other actors, but without any significant power other than the good will of states.

## 7.1 *The discourses*

The pilot episode demonstrated one discourse that was not truly expanded upon in the actual series, while every other discourse was. This was the nationalist discourse, which after consideration would more aptly be named populist discourse, since the goal of nationalist sentiment is merely to increase the popularity or gain something to those who employ it. Taking then the discourses present in the whole series (including the pilot) in order of magnitude and prevalence we find that the series emphasises the importance of *power* in one form or another as a driving force behind the actions of government; *properness* or image as indicative of the capacity to stay in power; *economics* as the bottom line behind all government acts; *ineptitude* of political leaders throughout the globe, questioning the efficiency of democracy, while not hailing a technocracy either; *conservatism* as a rule, indicating the existence of material forces behind actions; and lastly *populism* as the modus operandi of politicians to maintain their image, albeit through empty promises.

Taking the same discourses and seeing what they tell us from a theoretical point of view about the significance in both the individual-structure and material-idealist axis allows us to paint an even clearer picture. I proceed in reverse order than above from the discourse of weakest significance to that of most significant. The populist discourse indicates that ideas play a significant role in determining how the world is viewed. However, calling forth one form of rhetoric or another doesn't change the underlying actions taken or the pressures felt. This makes the populist discourse an ultimately materialist one. That such rhetoric needs to be employed indicates a pressure and expectation from the electorate and one's peers slightly tending to give significance to the structure where the individual is located. One cannot pursue one's goals without the approval of the structure, less one lose all power.

The conservative discourse can only be justified by the assumption that there are material forces that make government after government and country after country behave in similar fashions, making it a highly materialist discourse. Locating it on the individual-structure axis though is a trickier question. On the one hand each state is shown to behave in a similar manner to each other, so a status quo is maintained through mutual acceptance of sovereignty and non-interference. However when the status quo threatens to be broken by say a country invading another, non-interference is forgone and states will break the sovereignty of another. This is however done according to the series to return or maintain the status quo in world politics, thus not truly causing change. The international system as itself creates this pressure to maintain a balanced situation, indicating some structural pressure, but then again no supranational institution with power to

impose this pressure upon states that wouldn't comply is presented and even the United Nations is disempowered nearly completely, ultimately making the conservative discourse one that proclaims the significance of individual actors rather than structure.

A critique of democracy characterizes the ineptitude discourse with true power lying behind the perceived holders of power, in the hands of the officials. An elaborate masquerade is however necessary to hold this façade in place, indicating again the importance of image, much in the same way as was with the populist discourse. It could be then argued that the ineptitude discourse as well appears idealist but is in reality materialist. This would however be an oversimplification, since the underlying reason for maintaining certain rhetoric towards the outside is no longer as self serving as within the populist discourse. Within the framework of the ineptitude discourse it is merely to make government work without interruptions. A change in image is seen as a true threat that could create change, something that a purely materialist view wouldn't allow. The discourse tends slightly to the structural side. While it makes allowances for the politicians to attempt to achieve their goals independently at both national and international levels, these are shown to be doomed to failure if they contradict with the elaborate structure of government and bureaucracy in place.

Money makes the world go round and so it seems when looking at the economic discourse as well. It is present throughout the series, but its significance is subjugated on occasion to the power discourse in one form or another. The global economy is presented as a structure that has clear effect on the deliberations of states and on their actions. That economic factors are considered with every event makes the economic discourse one of a strong structuralist character. As a brute force that must be considered no matter what thinks it indicates a strong materialist view as well.

The significance of image is apparent from the properness discourse making it one with a strong idealist character. It is also one that supersedes the economic discourse on occasion and thus balances out the otherwise strong materialist view being put forth by YPM. The reason properness and image are so significant is because of the expectations both other states and the people have towards their leaders and each other. Not only states, but also international institutions are referenced as demanding certain types of behaviour from their members, whether official as in the cases of the Commonwealth and the ECC, or unofficial as in the case of the Western civilized countries, or Anglo-American union. These all indicate that the international structure places pressure on maintaining a certain image and conduct, making the properness discourse quite structural.

Lastly we come to the largest discourse of all. One that could be considered to encompass every other discourse dealt with beforehand, the power discourse. The power discourse primarily calls forth a self-serving and egoistic view of states and other actors, making it very individualistic. States will do what they not because of de facto structural pressure, but because not complying with structural demands is seen as being less advantageous than following suit. It is hinted at that when sufficient national interests are present, states will behave as selfish individual actors. This places the power discourse above all other pressures states may feel towards their behaviour. Power maximizing is not denied as a goal and sufficient material capacity to use military force is put forward as a necessity, indicating a materialist stance. Both views are slightly offset with the introduction of normative power arguments which both make a claim for both idealism and structuralism, but not sufficiently to fully counterbalance the individualistic and materialistic claims of the power discourse.

Giving more emphasis to the more significant and extensive discourses we find then that we can locate the views expressed in YPM as tending slightly toward idealism, while remaining solidly in the realm of the materialist sphere of Wendt's x-axis. Correspondingly it demonstrates strong structuralist views, but counterbalances these with the underlying individualist arguments in the most significant of discourses, thus not situating itself fully in the extreme of the structuralist sphere, but still slightly within it. If a theory is to be found that encompasses these views it needs to be a very general one. After all, there is a great variance in the discourses that were expressed, but some were merely more forceful than others. A theory that is often categorized as belonging to the same sector in Wendt's diagram as YPM would be located is the English School theory of International Relations. The following is a description of the basics of the English school theory of International Relations. Most of the basics are taken from my Bachelor's Thesis<sup>188</sup>, which used the English school theory as a theoretical framework, and modified accordingly to show how it fits to describe the views in YPM.

## ***7.2 The theory - English school theory of international relations***

The English school theory of international relations is a sufficiently extensive framework to encompass all the behaviours exhibited in YPM. It concurs that states are to be taken as the basic units of an international whole, as they are the principal and highest form of international actor, or at least they believe themselves to be.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, English school theory makes the concession

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<sup>188</sup> Herrera, 2008.

<sup>189</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 16.

that states do not exist in a purely anarchical mode among each other, but illustrates how there may be some form of order within the international system. The theory sees

international relations as a world not merely of power or prudence or wealth or capability or domination but also one of recognition, association, membership, equality, equity, legitimate interests, rights, reciprocity, customs and conventions, agreements and disagreements, disputes, offenses, injuries, damages, reparations and the rest: the normative vocabulary of human conduct.<sup>190</sup>

Through this definition, it becomes clear that the international system is governed by a many interlocking aspects that go beyond mere competition between states. Despite the complexity of issues that must be taken into account to explain international actions, the theory stipulates that states have the same elementary goals as societies have, making the understanding of the internal workings of a state and society of some inherent importance, such as was the claim in this thesis. These can be summed up as the needs for trust, respect of property and protection. In the international arena, these translate the rules of "...mutual respect for sovereignty, the rule that agreements should be kept, and rules limiting resort to violence",<sup>191</sup> all of which are which can be seen as being presented in the various episodes of YPM in varying degrees.

To understand the behaviour of states within the international arena, the English school has three key concepts for approaching international relations, coined up originally by Martin Wight and further developed by many scholars, including Hedley Bull, Barry Buzan and Robert H. Jackson. Each of the three key concepts corresponds to respective philosophical views of the world and to one of three major International Relations traditions. YPM shows Great Britain as fluctuating primarily between the first two of these, which I will now explain.<sup>192</sup>

### **7.2.1 International system**

The first of these concepts is that of an international system, corresponding to a Machiavellian or Hobbesian philosophy of the world. The thought is that states are in a constant play of power politics between one another. This represents the weakest form of interstate connection that exists within the English school theory. According to Bull, it is sufficient for an international system to form for "...two or more states [to] have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave – at least in some measure – as parts of a whole".<sup>193</sup> With the growth of an international economy and a near global membership of the United Nations, not to mention an ever increasing rate of globalization, it can be assumed that all

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<sup>190</sup> Jackson, 1992, p. 271.

<sup>191</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>192</sup> Buzan, 2004, pp. 6-7.

<sup>193</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 9.

states must form an international system of some sorts, if not with every state, then at least with some of them.<sup>194</sup> YPM shows Great Britain as being connected economically and politically to several other nations, e.g. The Soviet Union and the United States.

From an International Relations study standpoint, the international system correlates strongly with mainstream realist and neo-realist views of the world.<sup>195</sup> States are seen as being ultimately governed by strong individualistic tendencies, giving priority to national responsibilities.<sup>196</sup> A state must have strong rule, be it from the government, the president, or from a sovereign. The state must protect its subjects from foreign threats, although some states are militarily better equipped than others to do so. This does not necessarily translate as insecurity for the less capable one. Security may even arise from a vastly asymmetric situation, as YPM shows the case to be between the Soviet Union and Great Britain.<sup>197</sup>

In broad terms we could say that states may attempt to maximize their power, or seek higher levels of security or defence by even military means. However, they are limited in part by the consideration of the other states' actions. In this form, the international system has a degree of order, despite existing in an anarchical environment.<sup>198</sup> Power maximizing does not always take the form of force. States make calculations to achieve their aims. To give just two examples: law is often preferred to force, despite power maximization goals, because it is simply more cost effective. Non interference in most cases is less inconvenient than meddling in the affairs of other states.<sup>199</sup>

## 7.2.2 International society

A deeper connection of states is implied in the concept of international society. To form an international society, states must do more than merely factor in another states' calculations. The states must be "...conscious of common interests or values, conceiving themselves to be bound by a common set of rules, or co-operating in the working of common institutions"<sup>200</sup> like the EEC and the Commonwealth are mentioned in YPM. The concept of an international society corresponds with a Grotian philosophy of the world and a rationalist approach in International Relations.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Buzan, 2004, p.7.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>197</sup> Jackson 1990, pp. 167-170.

<sup>198</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 10.

<sup>199</sup> Jackson, 1990, p. 170.

<sup>200</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 13.

<sup>201</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 7.

In an international society states are governed by rational behaviour and attempt to find the best choice solutions when in problems. They attempt to create frameworks for orderly coexistence in one form or another, but bearing in mind the connections they all have with one another. States share interests and identity among each other and attempt centrally to create and maintain shared norms, rules and institutions. The forms of action taken by states are dependent on the degree of these three. YPM shows Great Britain to mostly exist in an international society of pluralist states, sharing only few norms, rules and institutions. Pluralist actions are considered more conservative in nature, with states being often content with the status quo of international society, a theme echoed throughout YPM, particularly by the civil service.<sup>202</sup>

A unifying factor among states in an international society is that priority is given by states to international responsibilities, as opposed to national-, or humanitarian responsibilities.<sup>203</sup> While this is not the common order of importance portrayed in YPM, the emphasis on the international extends to adding one more elementary goal for states within the international society, which is present. This is the goal of preserving the system of a society of states, in other words status quo seeking.<sup>204</sup>

States have and identify legal duties, moral obligations, mutual respect and other forms of civil conduct as essential for international relations, much in accordance to what was discussed with reference to the properness discourse. States are considered by nature reciprocal and subjected to normative restrictions from the part of others.<sup>205</sup>

### **7.2.3 World society**

Moving slightly out of the focus on states is the concept of world society. Corresponding to a Kantian philosophy of the world, extending order in the international society to all order among mankind as a whole. As Bull argues, this form of order is more than just more fundamental and primordial than order among states, it is also "...something morally prior to it".<sup>206</sup> People and societies must overcome their individualistic natures and embrace true cosmopolitanism to form a world society. Priority is given to humanitarian responsibilities over international-, or even national ones.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Buzan, 2004, pp. 7-9.

<sup>203</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>204</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 16-18.

<sup>205</sup> Jackson, 1990, pp. 171-173.

<sup>206</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 21.

<sup>207</sup> Buzan, 2004, pp.7-8.

From an International Relations standpoint world society corresponds classically to the revolutionist tradition, although this view is contested by modern theorists. It has its base in the philosophical aspect of world society, since Kant saw sovereignty as an obstacle to enlightenment.<sup>208</sup> Revolutionist approaches attempt to overcome and replace the states-system, whereas as previously stated, states are at the centre of English school theory.<sup>209</sup> Buzan has mentioned that “[w]orld society is clearly aimed at socially constructed non-state systems...”<sup>210</sup>, but Bull has argued that it is only through the mechanism of sovereign states that “...the interests of mankind are articulated and aggregated, and a political socialisation and recruitment moulds a universal political system”<sup>211</sup>, thus maintaining the state as the principal actor even in a world society, if only to form it.

World society is not only the most undeveloped theoretical part of the English school theory, it is also considered as non-existent yet “...except as an idea or myth which may one day become powerful, but has not done so yet”.<sup>212</sup> It is therefore not surprising that YPM doesn’t show such a construct to exist either.

It is important to note that according to English school theory ...international system, international society and world society all exist simultaneously, both as objects of discussion and as aspects of international reality”.<sup>213</sup> It is in great part this holistic approach that renders English school theory as an apt framework to describe YPM. The statesmen routinely discuss issues from varying perspectives corresponding mostly to the international system and international society views of the English school theory. Figure 1 below is a representation of the previously discussed triad of views within English school theory. It States may behave at one point more in accord with a world view corresponding to one of the three main sectors and even then in a manner which positions them closer to one approach within each specific sector. States can further change their behaviour depending on a myriad of reasons. YPM demonstrates this tendency of states and international organizations to vary their stances in world affairs depending on various considerations, not least of which is the personal gain of the statesmen taking the decision. These stances do not however reach a world society at any point, but fluctuate between an international society and an international system. This tendency to vary stances and positions with respect to other states teaches the viewer to be flexible and understanding when states seem to change their views and values seemingly overnight.

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<sup>208</sup> Jackson, 1990, p. 166.

<sup>209</sup> Buzan, 2004, pp. 34-35.

<sup>210</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 27.

<sup>211</sup> Bull, 1977, p. 82.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 10.



**Figure 5:** The English school theory triad.<sup>214</sup>

The English school theory of international relations appears extensive enough to encompass all of the discourses from YPM and their conclusions, but at the same time it is disputed whether or not it can be called an actual theory for the same reason. However, as I stated earlier in this thesis, knowing an exact theory that describes YPM would not give us much added value than what was already gained by placing the discourses on Wendt's diagram, which can be said to describe the world view of YPM, whether it fits squarely into an existing theory or not. The English School claim does however fit nicely in the academic tendencies of the time of airing, thus giving credence to the claim.

## 8 Considerations

It is a matter of argument whether the theories mentioned should encompass also those that were not well formed at the time the series appeared. Having had a wider range of possibilities available at the time, the authors may have made a markedly different kind of series. I would counter such criticism on the grounds that the authors of the series were not active political scientists and as such did not probably intend to emphasize one specific theoretical viewpoint more than another. This is not to say that their work was not influential and aimed at certain changes in the way audiences perceived the world, but merely to state that we may use a repertoire of present day theories to best describe these effects.

It is conceivable that the material in DVD form may have some differences from the ones aired in the 1980's. This is however not mentioned in the DVD's, or their boxes. No mention of such

<sup>214</sup> Buzan, 2004, p. 9.

change exists at any of the pages dedicated to the series. With a series as popular as this, it would be presumable some mention of a variance would be made, had one existed.

Any purely textual discourse analysis might seem as though it was coined up by the author and is therefore easily subject to much criticism. Even while writing this thesis I was approached more than once with people who were strongly critical of this form of analysis. I already granted that discourse analysis is to some extent always subject to new interpretations depending on the era the analyst resides in. One could argue that a quantitative study would better suit media analysis by giving numeric values to the significance and repetition of statements. Higher values could be given for the same discourse appearing in consecutive episodes than for separate ones, as could be done for discourses encompassing a larger percentage of the episode than other. There are several other possibilities as well, but would require an investigation into media theory and the psychological influence of media types. Values might then be simply added together to give coherent results throughout the times. While tempting, this would diminish the significance of communication to merely a mechanical act. Discourse analysis allows us to investigate a plethora of signals that form the totality of communication, not just add things together.

The era the thesis deals with is already long past and the world political order has changed much since those days. One may ask the question weather this kind of investigation has any significance in today's world. To this my answer is historically based in the sense that understanding the past allows us to better understand and deal with the present. While some may not find the chosen material to be of significance, nothing prevents the same or very similar methods from being used to answer other questions from a variety of different media outlets. If this thesis can contribute to furthering such endeavours, it will have served a purpose in today's world, larger than the mere graduation of its author.

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## Appendix 1: Transcription notes

This thesis used the following transcription conventions:

<u>text</u>	underlined text indicates an emphasis.
TEXT	capitalized text is used to indicate an increase in loudness.
[but-]	square brackets indicate overlapping speech.
(1,5)	numbers in parenthesis indicate a pause of the length in seconds marked within them. In this example the pause is of 1,5 seconds.
((sneeze))	acts or characteristics by the characters such as coughing, whispering, etc are shown within a double parentheses.
ye-	a single dash shows a cutoff.
{stands up}	non-verbal behaviour is marked between curly brackets.
..	an untimed pause that is at most half a second is indicated by a truncated ellipsis.
...	an untimed pause that is over half a second is indicated by an ellipsis.
.	a full stop indicates lowering intonation, usually indicating the end of a sentence.
,	a coma shows level intonation.
?	a question mark shows rising intonation, usually indicating a question.
te::xt	two colons indicate a prolonging of the prior sound or syllable.
°dear lady°	degree signs indicate softly spoken utterances.
“Oh”	speech set off by a shift in the speakers voice is marked between double quotes.

The conventions are adapted from Eeva-Leena Seppänen's book Vuorovaikutus paperilla.

## Appendix 2: List of YPM episodes being analysed

### Christmas special (1984)

# Title	Broadcast	Synopsis
1 "Party Games"	17 December	The unexpected resignation of the PM prompts a race for the succession, and as Party Chairman, Hacker is in a key position — and the Civil Service, now headed by Sir Humphrey, has its own agenda.

### Season One (1986)

# Title	Broadcast	Synopsis
1 "The Grand Design"	9 January	With his finger now on the nuclear button, Hacker plans his first act as Prime Minister to be a radical new defence policy.
2 "The Ministerial Broadcast"	16 January	Hacker is groomed for his first television broadcast as PM, but Sir Humphrey is more concerned with the content.
3 "The Smoke Screen"	23 January	Hacker uses his Health Minister's plan to eliminate smoking as a bluff against the Treasury.
4 "The Key"	30 January	The PM decides to clip Sir Humphrey's wings when he engages in a territorial battle with Hacker's political advisor.
5 "A Real Partnership"	6 February	Sir Humphrey has to get through a civil service pay claim while at the same time discrediting its proposer.
6 "A Victory for Democracy"	13 February	Hacker has difficulty discovering if the Foreign Office is there to carry out government policy or vice versa.
7 "The Bishop's Gambit"	20 February	A troubled British nurse in Qumran and a vacant bishopric combine to provide an opportunity for Sir Humphrey.
8 "One of Us"	27 February	The former head of MI5 is revealed to be a spy (despite Sir Humphrey clearing him), while a dog strays on to Salisbury Plains.

### Season Two (1987–88)

# Title	Broadcast	Synopsis
1 "Man Overboard"	3 December	Sir Humphrey fights the Employment Secretary's plan to relocate service personnel by casting doubt over the Minister's loyalty.
2 "Official Secrets"	10 December	Hacker's attempt to suppress an unflattering chapter of his predecessor's memoirs that has been leaked to the press.
3 "A Diplomatic Incident"	17 December	The death of Hacker's predecessor provides a chance for some negotiations with the French over the Channel Tunnel at his state funeral.
4 "A Conflict of Interest"	23 December	Hacker can avoid a City scandal if he appoints a Bank of England Governor whose honesty isn't beyond reproach.
5 "Power to the People"	7 January	Sir Humphrey and the leader of Houndsworth Council become strange bedfellows when Hacker tries to reform local government.
6 "The Patron of the Arts"	14 January	Hacker's invitation to the British Theatre Awards dinner becomes a hot potato when the size of the Arts Council grant is revealed.
7 "The National Education Service"	21 January	When the Department of Education and Science stands in the way of reform, Hacker decides to abolish it.
8 "The Tangled Web"	28 January	When Hacker unwittingly lies to the House of Commons he is helped by Sir Humphrey's unfortunate indiscretion.

The list is taken from Wikipedia<sup>215</sup> and is consistent with the episode descriptions given in the DVD box set covers. The Christmas, while technically not a part of the YPM show, is included in the analysis, since it lays the background for the minister's rise to be Prime Minister and has significant foreign affairs connections in its storyline.

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<sup>215</sup> List of Yes Minister and Yes, Prime Minister episodes – Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Yes\\_Minister\\_and\\_Yes,\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_episodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yes_Minister_and_Yes,_Prime_Minister_episodes).