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**The Construction of Discursive  
Difficulty: The Circulation of, and  
Resistance to, Moral Asymmetries in  
the Public Debate over the Invasion of  
Iraq in 2003**

**Joseph David Burrige**



**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, February  
2005**

## *Abstract*

This thesis examines the operation of morally asymmetrical distinctions in the discourse produced in advance of the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. It does not set out to explain the invasion's occurrence, but, based upon the analysis of media texts, parliamentary debates, and political speeches, focuses upon aspects of the processes of justification and criticism preceding invasion.

It blends together aspects of the work of Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann, with insights drawn from various approaches to the analysis of discourse and communication, in pursuit of an understanding of how the discursive space available to contributors to debate is restricted. It pays close attention to the closely related processes of 'disclaiming' and 'ontological gerrymandering' – interventions which are concerned with controlling what is, and is not, the case – particularly in terms of the way that they are orientated towards controlling how the person making them is to be observed.

It is argued that the circulation of the illegitimacy of various positions puts some contributors at risk of being observed according to the more negative side of a morally asymmetrical distinction. It is argued that this creates 'difficulty' for them, and incites their engagement in particular forms of discursive work in the attempt to avoid illegitimacy themselves.

Close attention is paid to any observable regularities in the ways in which contributors attempted to avoid having their position associated with, amongst other things, 'anti-Americanism', 'appeasement', 'pacifism', 'warmongering', or a 'pro-Saddam' stance, all of which would threaten their legitimacy.

A variety of techniques are identified, including the invocation of a contributor's history of positions (their 'communicative career'), as well as their use of their allegedly less legitimate context-specific allies as a contrastive foil, at the expense of whom they claim their own legitimacy.

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## 1. Introduction

[T]he cognitive style of 'What?' questions must be changed to that of 'How?' questions. The unity of what is asked with a 'What?' question is always a product of the system that asks the question. It is therefore necessary to know first how it is that the question came to be asked. The system, whether a psychic or social one, asks how it asks about what is as it is. But even this statement is naturally nothing more than a communicative maneuver of redirecting communication. I don't know if I mean what I say. And if I knew, I would have to keep it to myself.

(Luhmann, 2002: 183-4).

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.

(Rumsfeld, 2002).

According to Žižek (2003: 9), the key omission from the above statement by Donald Rumsfeld is the possibility of 'unknown knowns' – what we do not know that we know – which corresponds with the Freudian unconscious. Although psychoanalysis lies beyond the scope of this project, it is fair to ask how many people with access to the global news media were actually *shocked* in the sense of being *surprised* by the fact the bombing campaign known as 'shock and awe' was launched by the 'coalition of the willing' in March 2003. We knew it was going to happen even if we did not acknowledge that we knew it.

Whilst the mass media arguably framed the 'first' Gulf War in 1991 as 'an exciting narrative, as a nightly miniseries with dramatic conflict, action and adventure' (Kellner, 1995: 210), with the expansion of 24 hour news in the period between the two wars, it is

perhaps better to describe the coverage of the 2003 invasion as less a miniseries than a month long uninterrupted media marathon. Moreover, it was one with over a year's worth of advance publicity.

The use of military force against Iraq had been a looming possibility for the preceding 18 months, despite ongoing diplomatic wrangling and the return to Iraq of the United Nations weapons inspectors. Despite the concerted efforts to prevent it, we all knew that it was going to happen, even those of us that wanted not to admit as much.

Sociologically many dimensions of the conflict could be explored analytically, ranging from its historical connection to US foreign policy in general to the significance of communications technology such as the internet in the organisation of the world-wide anti-war protests in February 2003 (Alexander, 2004: 283).

Thus far, a variety of accounts of, and explanations for, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 have been forthcoming, including those criticising the official reasons advanced to justify it. These have ranged from Herman's (2004: 177) identification of three main 'gambits' – demonisation of Saddam Hussein, claims regarding Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction threatening US Security, and the failed diplomacy and inspections – to Ali's (2002: 146) advance account of the official 'apologetics' – Saddam Hussein's 'insatiable' aggression, his stockpiling of 'weapons of mass destruction', and his regime's 'malignant ferocity'. Žižek's (2003: 1) account discusses the various arguments used, claiming that their inconsistency recalls Freud's 'borrowed kettle' joke – the enunciation of inconsistent arguments serving to confirm the very thing that it endeavours to deny.

This project aims to explore the discourse produced in the controversy surrounding the invasion, focussing upon the dynamics (or otherwise) of the openness or closure of the space available for debate, and the closely associated struggle for definition involved in justification and criticism. In particular, attention is directed to the circulation of morally asymmetrical distinctions and identifications,

and the ‘difficulty’ that they can create for contributors to debate. Attention is directed to the sense in which the arguments made are morally loaded, and how they rely upon particular definitions of the situation for their efficacy.

In the rest of this chapter I give preliminary consideration to questions relating to issues such as: the problem driving the thesis; its theoretical location; the analytic strategy adopted; the analytical foci; and the project’s possible utility. Each of these strands is discussed under its own heading below.

## ***1.1. The Problem: Morality and Discourse***

### **1.1.1. Morality**

Issues relating to morality were a direct motivating factor for many of those authors credited with a key role in the establishment and development of sociology. However, it is not especially prominent in contemporary research. Few studies are explicitly framed in moral terms (although there are obvious theoretical exceptions – Bauman, 1993; 1995; Smart, 1999; Fevre, 2002).

This situation may be due in part to the decline in shared moral frameworks that has allegedly beset western capitalist societies (MacIntyre, 1985). In a temporal, spatial and cultural location where meta-narratives and certainties seem decreasingly popular, discussing ‘ethics’ rather than ‘morality’ sounds less harsh somehow, and being ‘ethically engaged’ lacks many of the negative connotations of force and coercion associated with ‘moralising’.

Despite an apparent aversion to explicitly discussing morality, there is nevertheless a widespread tendency to get involved, and sometimes preoccupied, with various conceptions of the ‘should’. A lot of research operates within a space in which the gap between what is the case and what (really) should be the case is all-important. Some sort of normative background is an unavoidable feature of all writing, but when it becomes the main focus of attention rather than how and why some situation came about it can often take on a rather moralising

tone (the source of Luhmann's frustration with much of the work of the Frankfurt School – see Luhmann, 2002: 187-93).

### **1.1.2. Discourse**

Within most of the social 'sciences' and their closely associated subjects there has been an ever-increasing interest in something often referred to as 'discourse'. Its invocation is often extremely vague and various definitions are conflated under the term (Fairclough, 1992; Mills, 2001: 1). Whilst specific conceptions obviously have their own particular emphasis, in general they aim to articulate the significance of language as a constitutive phenomenon, and as a socially and psychologically organised practice. A variety of methods aimed at studying the significance of language are available, many of which can be drawn upon in an examination of the contemporary significance of the moral aspects of communication.

When it comes to morality, controversy and conflict can be considered central issues (Black, 1998). Where the same values are not necessarily shared, they are often considered to be in competition, and such competition can in some cases colonise and divide entire political systems.

There is also the possibility that different values are so divergent that they are based upon totally different logics such that no resolution between them is possible. The claims made by each are incommensurable with one another (MacIntyre, 1985; Lyotard, 1988), and to decide in favour of one rather than the other is to fundamentally reject the other's internal logic and do 'violence' to it. Rather than entering debate at the point of deciding which of two competing values should win, a more interesting analytic question refers to whether or not it is possible to observe how it is that they conflict, and the ways in which they might nevertheless interact with one another. It is usually assumed that in order to disagree, two interlocutors have to agree on at least something, i.e., what it is they disagree about (Billig, 1996), but we can enquire more closely into the specific location of such (dis)agreement.

## **1.2. *The Theoretical Location***

It is important to identify some of the theories with which I am engaging in dialogue, in order to explain how my project is embedded within sociology. In the interest of reflexivity I would first like to acknowledge a theoretical re-orientation that occurred whilst the project was underway.

As originally conceived this project intended to explore similar themes, but with a rather different set of theoretical instruments, and a more normative orientation. It was going to engage directly with the literature on 'risk' (Beck, 1992), and 'reflexive modernization' (Giddens, 1991; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), with the argumentative forms observed being assessed in relation to a Habermasian notion of 'discourse ethics' (Habermas, 1984a; 1984b; 1990), or a softer sense of their democratic or anti-democratic implications. However, once underway, I moved away from pursuit of this possibility for several reasons.

Firstly, as my theoretical and methodological position has progressed, I developed a degree of suspicion about the other theoretical and normative merits of this body of literature. In particular dissatisfaction with Beck's work regarding whether 'risk' is to be treated ontologically or epistemologically (for critiques in this regard see Van Loon, 2000; Dean, 1999: 182; Lupton, 1999: 60; Cottle, 1998: 10; Alexander and Smith, 1996: 254-6).

Secondly, based upon acceptance of critiques of Habermas regarding his implicit desire to reduce and overcome difference and multiplicity (Rasch, 2000a: 32; Falzon, 1998: 81; Rescher, 1993; also see Mouffe, 2000: 33, 105; Torfing, 1999: 69), I became disenchanted with his normative framework. No matter how open the procedure adopted in its achievement, the requirement to end with a single voice is rather unattractive to me. This is one of the most obvious ways in which my personal normative assumptions and political preferences are influential.

Thirdly, and more pragmatically, I decided that analysis of the operation and significance of morality might be better pursued by being detached from an explicit set of normative concerns, and pursued from a very different starting point – people who could actually be viewed as the intellectual enemies of those with whom I began. I decided I did not want to be constantly involved in interrogating my materials for the degree to which they deviate from some ideal or other.

In the most general terms, the project is rooted in a constructivist position, foregrounding the constitution and emergence of the social world, without necessitating an automatic denial of its ‘reality’. The two most central influences are systems theoretical sociologist Niklas Luhmann, and Michel Foucault, although the project also draws upon an eclectic blend of insights drawn from various approaches to the analysis of discourse and communication, as will become clear.

I am not simply pursuing one theory as far as it can go, but I am drawing upon various divergent ones, often in order to clarify what it is that I am, and am not doing (or intending to do). The high degree of eclecticism could be considered too ambitious or as leading to incoherence. However, I would argue that this is not automatically the case. Drawing upon a variety of sources is enriching if it is done critically, and stops short of attempting a grand synthesis. Clarity about what I am drawing from where (and how and why) is obviously very important, and an integral part of the writing process, which cannot be adequately judged in advance. Just as the application of summarising labels is not sufficient to establish the validity of what has occurred, so too the absence of such labels should not automatically lead to research being rendered invalid.

In particular I am interested in the significance of the admissibility (or otherwise) of particular arguments within an already defined discursive space, and more generally the constant negotiation and ‘policing’ of the boundaries of that space through means that are

oriented towards issues of morality, in particular morally asymmetrical distinctions.

Rather than being concerned with either the production of arguments, or their consumption, the focus is intended to be upon the issue of dispersion, or circulation – the space between the other two – with, of necessity, some overlap with them. Talk of circulation, or a system of dispersion obviously invokes Foucault (1972: 37), but this can also be connected up to Luhmann's theorisation of communication as a self-referential three-stage process (information, utterance, expectation of success) involving the unity of three selections (see Luhmann, 1995: 139-45). This will be elaborated further in the following chapter. For now, it is enough to note that my emphasis leads to a preoccupation not with truth and falsity, but with connectivity, with 'possibility' and 'difficulty'. There is a need for the analysis of the consequentiality of discourse, within the parameters of the controversy, which is arguably semi-autonomous from the question of truth/falsity of the statements or the validity of the arguments made within it.

### ***1.3. The Analytical Strategy***

The project considers the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, including aspects of the process of justification, in particular the circulation of negative, disqualifying, identifications and the difficulty they engender for contributors, as well as the forms of resistance adopted by those at risk of being associated with them.

Whilst the project is theoretically informed it is also empirically driven. However, it is not simply about this specific context – the context is the stimulus, but not the only possible domain of application. Generalisation is of course something about which care is required, but there is no good reason to assume that the processes and difficulties discussed are limited to discussion of Iraq.

The project is not aimed at producing a definitive account of the invasion of Iraq. A single project with such an aim would be either

naïve or arrogant, and doomed to miserable failure. Doubtless, the issue of Iraq will keep many people going for a whole career! The main role of the context is to provide an anchor restricting the extent to which my floating away on a sea of self indulgence is possible.

My project is admittedly rather ethnocentric to the extent that its focus is upon the UK, and to less an extent the US, and there are several areas of possible attention on the issue of Iraq with I am not engaging, all of which could be usefully analysed in detail. A far from exhaustive list includes – identifying a set of causal factors explaining why the war occurred; the conduct of the military action itself; the significance of oil in the world economy; the inattention to and exclusion of the voices of the Iraqi people within the justification and criticism preceding invasion; the development of the Stop the War Coalition as a social movement with an institutional legacy. In contrast to many other accounts of the context which are more obviously political or Critical in intent (see, for example, Kellner, 1992: 7; Miller, 2004: 3; Edwards and Cromwell, 2004: 212) I will largely refrain from commenting upon the truth/falsity of the arguments made to justify or criticise the invasion.

#### ***1.4. The Analytical Foci***

One key focus of the project is the existence of attempts at gaining advantage through the use of morality in argumentation. My use of ‘morality’ is intended to be a critical and selective appropriation from Luhmann’s use of it as the unity of the distinction good/bad or right/wrong (Luhmann, 1995). In particular I am interested in the formation of moral asymmetries – the attachment of the code of morality to other distinctions drawn in communication, specifically in the context of the public debate revolving around the invasion of Iraq.

The project has an explicit orientation to morally loaded arguments – words, phrases and claims apparently embodying morality, the distinction good/bad or right/wrong, and associated implications of esteem/contempt. It is therefore intended as a second-



order analysis of the use of this distinction not as directly advocating particular versions of evaluation. Of course, one can always argue about the extent to which this is possible (or not) and my own set of normative assumptions is likely to occasionally intrude – it is impossible for them not to. However, a more interesting location for critique would perhaps be on the issue of the English languages confusion over evaluation in terms of the vagueness of ‘good’ (and ‘right’). Valuation, and attention to issues of quality, can be a matter of morality, but also aesthetics, and also a technical assessment. When either of these words is used, how do we know that it is morality rather than artistic or technical goodness that is observed? This is obviously a very big question, which complicates the identification of communication about morality. As with anything else, it is a matter of interpretation, and no hard and fast rules exist. However, this lack of a clear separation is also analytically interesting, and the possibility of the conflation of the three forms of ‘goodness’ or the colonisation of one by another is already present within sociological writings (for example, Bauman’s work on ‘adiaphorisation’ – Bauman, 1993; 1995) or Foucault’s notion of an art of ethics (Foucault, 1985; 1986; O’Leary, 2002; Privitera, 1995). It will have to suffice for me to say that it is not simply the use of the words ‘good’ or ‘right’ that will alert my attention, implications of respect/disrespect, and esteem/contempt are also within my radar, and these would seem much less likely to be confused with conceptions of technical excellence, or beauty.

The materials utilised within the analysis range from British national newspaper coverage to parliamentary debates, political speeches and literature produced by various relevant interest groups. These materials are approached via tools provided by a wide variety of methodological sources, including insights from amongst others critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and the American literature on ‘the construction of ‘social problems’’. In keeping with what I have outlined so far, my focus will be upon regularities in processes of framing, and the policing of discursive boundaries; key words, formulaic phrases and notably recurrent rhetorical flourishes;

the negotiation of questions of legitimacy regarding the positions adopted; associated hedging, and disclaiming practices and other attempts at protecting speakers; and the sites of agreement between opponents – evidence of a degree of order within conflict.

Greater detail regarding the analytical foci is provided in the subsequent **Methodology** chapter. One overarching aim of the project is to attempt to assess the extent to which particular words, phrases and their implications can be said to mobilise moral asymmetries – creating ‘discursive difficulty’ and inciting statements of particular types aimed at evading it.

### **1.5. *The Utility?***

It seems suitable to raise the question of the research’s potential applications. The ‘findings’ generated by the project can be argued to bear some relevance to the policy process, including how policy proposals could best be packaged. However, it is not my intention to be producing a guidebook for those who wish to improve how they ‘spin’! I am hoping that certain aspects might serve as a partial critical warning against accepting a narrowness of focus at an early stage of idea generation such that other potentially useful possibilities are ruled out before undergoing any consideration simply because they do not fit in with the emergent definition of what is central.

Less instrumentally, it is hoped that it will contribute to an understanding of some aspects of how the articulation of moral argumentation operates in contemporary controversies. Obviously an understanding of the process involved in gaining advantage is something which would appeal to those wishing to do so, which potentially opens up certain ethical questions, including the possibility that the findings could be put to uses with which I may not be comfortable. More importantly, for me, is the possibility that those who are often disadvantaged, and their voices excluded by this process of advantage gaining, may find the project’s arguments of some use in formulating modes of engagement with controversial issues in the

future – a rather Foucauldian sounding (and perhaps also pretentious) aim to ‘clear a space in which the formerly voiceless might begin to speak’ (Moussa and Scapp, 1996: 89).

### ***1.6. The Chapters that Follow***

The rest of the main body of this thesis is split into three sections, subdivided into several chapters. The first section is made up of three chapters, concerned with the **Theoretical Literature** influencing the project, the more **Empirical Literature** concerned with the Iraq war, and an elaboration of the **Methodological Approach** adopted. It should be noted that there is considerable overlap between aspects of the theoretical and methodological chapters. They are highly interrelated with regard to the ways in which my subsequent observations are informed by the combined influences of the materials they discuss.

The second section includes empirical chapters concerned with various dimensions of the public debate preceding and accompanying the war. The first three are concerned with the invocation and denial of links between Iraq and the **War on Terror(ism)**, accusations regarding the influence of **Anti-Americanism** upon opposition to war, and claims that opponents of war were **Pro-Saddam Apologists**. I then explore the significance of references to **Appeasement and Historical Analogies**, as well as references to **Pacifism**, and **Warmongering**, as well as the importance attributed to **Supporting the Troops**. The final empirical chapter concerns some dimensions of the significance of **Weapons of Mass Destruction** in the public debate.

The third section consists of a single **Discussion** chapter teasing out and linking together some issues emergent from the previous section, and noting possibilities that merit further exploration elsewhere.

## ***2. Theoretical Literature***

This chapter explains the intellectual background to the thesis. It starts with some consideration of the significance of morality within sociology, including recent debates about ‘demoralization’, and a critique of the conception of morality mobilised by Zygmunt Bauman. It then moves on to elucidate the dimensions of the work of Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann’s work that I am appropriating (using and abusing), and the way on which I believe they can be combined productively.

### ***2.1. Morality in Sociology***

Attempting to discuss ‘morality’ in a sociological or an everyday context can be a minefield because not only do people hold very strong opinions about it, they also lack a shared conception of what they mean by it. Like many other widely used words (power, structure, communication, poverty) the term mobilises very different connotations for various people, and this intensifies the possibility of interlocutors ‘talking past’ one another.

Nevertheless, broadly ‘moral’ concerns have played a significant part in the foundation and development of sociology (Levine, 1995; Shilling and Mellor, 1998), and it seems relevant to acknowledge and discuss some ideas and debates of direct and indirect relevance to this project.

#### ***2.1.1. Distinguishing Morality***

Morality can be the ‘other side’ of a variety of distinctions drawn in discourse. It is often distinguished from the cognitive, and/or aesthetic, or in a more binary sense, from the amoral, immoral, or indeed from ethics. The particular distinctions drawn will of course relate to the context directly under consideration at any one time, but also to the specific way in which morality is conceived by those distinguishing it. For example, *prescriptions* regarding what is ‘right’

can be distinguished from evaluations of what is 'good' (Barnsley, 1972: 49), and ethics can be distinguished from an abstract moral code which works from above, and used to imply practices that 'well up' from a specific group (Maffesoli, 1996: 15). Indeed 'ethics' is often conceived as mobilising a less universalistic domain of application than morality – a realm of relative freedom concerned with what is good or bad for me rather than what is right or wrong for everyone (see Habermas, 1990; Poole, 1991: 135). Others claim that morality is not necessarily universal, but does require some form of generalisation, or at least impersonality such that it is taken to be equally binding upon oneself as others (Barnsley, 1972: 36, 45).

Despite this potential for confusion, many people advocate the need for a greater moral or ethical dimension within sociological practice (Tester, 1994: 4; Levine, 1995: 100; Smart, 1999: 130). However, when it comes to questions of morality, there is a strong tension between an approach which *moralizes* and one which engages in the *thematization of morals* (Luckmann, 1996: 82), respectively approximating the tension between *prescriptive* and *analytic* narratives identified by Smart (1999: 176). Are we motivated to evaluate or to understand processes of evaluation?

As I have already implied, I am not entirely comfortable with starting from and being preoccupied with an 'ought' and using it as the primary orientation of research. This is not meant to imply a naïve, positivistic stance which denies the impact of my personal politics, and evaluative preferences. Instead it is more a suspicion about the ethics, and more importantly the efficiency and effectiveness, of 'the sociologist as advocate' in a direct sense. I will return to this issue in my Methodology chapter.

As ever, it is important to attend to the specific way that the term moral or morality is deployed in any account invoking it – the uses to which it is put often being a better guide to its meaning than an abstract definition. In the contemporary world one of the ways in which it is most commonly invoked is in relation to its alleged decline in importance.

### 2.1.2. Demoralization: The Moral in Decline?

In social and cultural writing 'the moral' has traditionally been closely aligned with the social in the sense of providing a type of 'social glue' contributing to the integration and maintenance of social solidarity and relations of reciprocity (approximating the classic Durkheimian position on 'organic solidarity' based upon the moral density resulting from the division of labour, see Durkheim, 1984: 201; Junge, 2001: 107).

According to Durkheim:

We may say that what is moral is everything that is a source of solidarity, everything that forces man to take account of other people, to regulate his actions by something other than the promptings of his own egoism, and the more numerous and strong those ties are, the more solid is the morality.

(Durkheim, 1984: 331).

A variety of sources mobilizing various different conceptions of morality suggest that the glue previously holding us together has begun to dry out, or break down, and that this is an extremely negative development.

One explanation of this general process of decline is that it is a logical corollary of the unfolding of modernity itself. As Poole (1991: ix) puts it, modernity: 'calls into existence certain conceptions of morality, but also destroys the grounds for taking them seriously'. It is self-undermining, putting even previously unquestioned truths and certainties under suspicion.

Some contributions view this and the associated process of 'demoralization' as a cause for intense concern. We are alleged to not only have less (in qualitative or quantitative terms) morality, or, more accurately, the lack of a shared moral language (Thompson and Sharma, 1998: 433), but relative to the other meaning commonly attributed to the term 'demoralization' we also have less morale – a crisis of confidence (Fevre, 2000: 1).

MacIntyre (1985: 6) argues that the relationship between morality and the social order has changed in such a way that: 'There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture', due to the 'the conceptual incommensurability of the rival arguments' (MacIntyre, 1985: 8; also see Holloway, 2000: 133). Instead of moral clarity, we have an allegedly problematic 'linguistic *melange*' (MacIntyre, 1985: 233).

MacIntyre (1985: 22) claims that the principle of emotivism – that all moral judgments are nothing more than expressed preferences – has widely penetrated western culture, something which has implications for the possibilities for meaningful dialogue, and the issue of persuasion:

If the good and the right is what feels to me to be the good and the right, there is no necessary reason to imagine that you will share those feelings. And how could we possibly discuss our differences of opinion and how might we be able to come to some kind of agreement (even if it is only an agreement to differ)? We could not. Consequently our feelings of what is good and right will be totally individualized.

(Tester, 2001: 58).

If moral claims are nothing more than the expression of our feelings then, it supposedly follows that we can no longer distinguish between manipulative and non-manipulative relations, because, we:

cannot genuinely appeal to impersonal criteria, for there are no impersonal criteria [...] The sole reality of distinctively moral discourse is the attempt of one will to align the attitudes, feelings, preferences, and choices of another with its own.

(MacIntyre, 1985: 24).

Whilst there is an element of persuasion involved in deliberations over moral issues, according to MacIntyre's (1985: 71) view, there is also a sense in which any contributions are addressed to those who already agree. The extent to which his account reflects his having been

‘seduced by the past’ (Poole, 1991: 146) means that his account also suffers from this!

One possibility is that a disagreement can be solved ‘externally to morality’, or that moral decisions are somehow disguised as technical ones (Barnsley, 1972: 17). In a study of the BBC’s Complaints Unit, Thompson and Sharma (1998): 435) point to the way in which complaints regarding taste and decency in programming are often resolved via the application of technical-rational criteria, thereby rendering the problem an administrative rather than straightforwardly moral one. Moral incommensurability is resolved via exiting the domain of morality!

Holloway (2000: 34) utilises the metaphor of jazz in order to formulate a possible approach to the messiness of contemporary morality and the improvisation allegedly involved. He refuses to condemn the messiness out of hand, preferring to admit that there is a possibility that choices can be made between ‘opposing goods rather than between right and wrong’ (Holloway, 2000: 93, 114-5).

Nevertheless, Holloway’s (2000: 130) account appreciates the attraction of ‘absolute moral certainty’, but instead of trying to eradicate the contradictions and complexities of moral disagreements with a final, definitive morality, argues that we should learn to live with them (Holloway, 2000: 93). An assertion of this type leaves itself open to the charge that it does not really provide any guide to action – how would it work? Also, it is likely to be viewed as advocating a celebration of uncertainty.

One contribution to the debate on demoralization painting a dystopic picture comes from Himmelfarb (1995). For her, Victorian England was a place of moral certainty and that since then we have undergone a shift from *virtues* (which went unquestioned) to *values* (which are viewed as contingent choices) (Tester, 1997: 121). For Himmelfarb, this is the result of a reflection upon things that should have been left alone. The problems which she identifies are largely due to: ‘the thinking about that which ought to remain unthought’ (Tester, 1997: 121). The implication of Himmelfarb’s account,



according to Tester's characterisation, is that there is a point beyond which problematisation should not go, yet we have crossed that line.

An interesting question concerns the extent to which this issue can be posed differently – when there are things being questioned, when controversy occurs, are there particular boundaries, which there is pressure not stray beyond? Are there socially defined limits to questioning with regard to morality?

Tester's work differs from Himmelfarb's, and focuses upon the relationship between culture, morality and the media. He argues that the media have made it impossible not to know of the suffering of others – we have lost our 'moral innocence' (Tester, 1997: 1) – and that we are 'metaphysically guilty' because we have developed a blasé attitude towards it (Tester, 1997: 151). More recently he has pursued such ideas in a roundabout critique of the thesis of 'compassion fatigue' (Tester, 2001: 13) which addresses the question of how far we have stopped noticing or caring about the suffering and tragedy which we are confronted in the media every day.

Whilst I would admit to agreeing with much of what Tester argues about things such as society's orientation to the suffering of others, his approach is, in relative terms, very much one of moralizing in Luckmann's sense. For example, he claims that the discipline known as 'cultural studies' precludes the possibility of moral evaluation, and therefore labels it 'morally cretinous' (Tester, 1994: 3), and my adoption of a degree of relativism perhaps means that I am a moral cretin! What is most important about Tester's contribution is that it is emblematic of many others in so far as it implies that 'if only' everyone would listen to him then the world would be much better off.

A more nuanced approach to demoralization comes from Fevre (2000: 22) who argues that the substance of what we now label morality is 'hollow' because the mundane reasoning that he describes as 'common sense' has seduced and colonised areas of social life in which 'other ways of thinking used to reign' (Fevre, 2000: 72). As

such, moral decisions take on the ‘tone of consumption’ (Fevre, 2000: 9) – a very negative development in his view.

Fevre constructs an *ideal-typical*, four cell table relating containing four different ways of sense-making and their ‘appropriateness’ or ‘fitness for purpose’ (Fevre, 2000: 20) to different domains of social life:

	<b>Non-human</b>	<b>Human</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	Science	Commonsense
<b>Belief</b>	Religion	Sentiment

(Fevre, 2000: 141)

Fevre’s (2000: 117) thesis is not concerned with the breakdown of morality but with its *replacement*, and he argues that in the domain of belief, commonsense (mundane reason) has displaced sentiment (emotional thought) as the hegemonic form of sense-making. There is, therefore, no longer any point in asserting that we ‘believe’ things. Instead, we are compelled to ‘know’, since commonsense requires evidence of the senses rather than the emotions (Fevre, 2000: 79; 90) and will take nothing else seriously. This thesis argues that it is more the content than the form of morality that has changed – something we describe as morality persists, but the rationale upon which it was previously based has been superseded by another rationale, and Fevre is disturbed by this development because he views the new content as leading to a very inferior ‘sham morality’ (Fevre, 2000: 226), which leaves ‘the façade of morality standing’ (Fevre, 2000: 68-9). According to Fevre, this sham morality can be perceived by listening out for a particular level of ‘*shrillness*’ (Fevre, 2000: 210) which accompanies it.

Fevre’s (2000: 160) ideal situation (in normative terms) is for us to ‘regain the ability to make sense in different ways’, a possibility which he denies is either radical or conservative. Aside from the fact

that this displays a type of nostalgia that arguably overstates the merits of that which was allegedly in the past, what is most interesting about Fevre's account is the way in which he seems to apply a type of moral reasoning to the question of morality, and it is clearly the case that he views morality as good. In his account a '*should*' and an '*is*' are constantly feeding off one another. The fact that Fevre explicitly attributes wrongness to the particular means of deciding rightness/wrongness is interesting and although not particularly shrill, he asserts that morality is itself to be evaluated as good (or right), and should take specific forms.

Another more indirect contribution to this debate, asserting the existence of a rather more subtle transformation is that of Furedi (2002). He enters with an acceptance of the argument that moral fragmentation has occurred – that there is no consensus on basic values and norms (Furedi, 2002: 68). However, he sees the development of a (negative) solution in the increasing prominence of risk and safety, such that they have replaced morality as a solution to the question of social cohesion (Furedi, 2002: 148). In particular Furedi claims that overtly moral discourse – the outright condemnation of people or practices – has become unfashionable (Furedi, 2002: 148), and that the distinctions normal/abnormal and moral/immoral are being superseded by the calculus of risk – a health and safety morality based upon the distinction safe/unsafe (Furedi, 2002: 150-1).

Luckmann (1996: 81) notes that explicit moralizing is a 'risky intersubjective undertaking' – it risks undermining the possibility of communicative agreement by provoking dissensus. In a context in which there is supposedly an absence of *a priori* agreement upon fundamental values such a risk would appear to be fairly high, so we might indeed expect the process of moral evaluation to become less overt. However, accepting this possibility – the increasing subtlety – is not the same as accepting that the moral (right/wrong) distinction is absent. We are instead confronted with an extremely difficult question regarding the degree to which this is a significant disjuncture, or the continuation of the same phenomenon but packaged differently.

Fevre's claims that the type of sense-making involved in morality has shifted certainly seems more plausible than to suggest that morality is in decline. After all, distinctions between, or implying, right and wrong, good and bad, better or worse, clearly persist in contemporary societies, and no-one can completely avoid processes of valuation (O'Connor, 1993: 38). Evaluation may occur differently, upon a different basis, according to a different form of sense-making, but that requires investigation rather than nostalgia and lamentation.

Writing long before these contemporary debates occurred, Barnsley (1972: 9) claimed that: 'We draw distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, all the time, without being cognizant of the criteria we are employing'. As will become clear, I am assuming that this is still the case – that moral asymmetries are mobilised and orientated towards in contemporary discourse – and as such I am following Luhmann in concentrating upon form rather than content. Before explaining this in more detail, I will discuss the contribution of the contemporary sociologist who has taken morality most seriously – albeit in a way that it arguably becomes a non-sociological phenomenon – Zygmunt Bauman.

### **2.1.3. Zygmunt Bauman and his Discontents**

For over more than a decade, Bauman has argued for a more 'postmodern' understanding of morality and its relationship to uncertainty, characterised in the following way:

1. humans are morally ambivalent
2. moral phenomena are non-rational
3. morality is riddled with irresolvable contradictions
4. morality is not universalizable
5. moral responsibility is the starting point, not the product of society – 'being for the other' comes *before* 'being with the other'.

(adapted from Bauman, 1993: 10-13).

Bauman sees potential in the alleged growth of uncertainty since it provides: 'the very soil in which the moral self takes root and grows' (Bauman, 1995: 287; also see Bauman, 1993: 80). Subverting more orthodox understandings, he rejects ethics as a set of codes to be followed, describing ethical systems as 'arrogant' in their assumption that they can successfully sort between good and evil (Bauman, 1995: 61).

Bauman advocates a morality without foundations in which we are asked to embrace 'the *drama of choice*' (Bauman, 1998: 13, original emphasis). He is rather dismissive of all attempts to achieve certainty regarding morality, labelling them 'crutches' because they only succeed in the absence of questioning. Once inspected, each one is exposed as a manufactured certainty: 'an unashamedly "made up" certainty' (Bauman, 2000: 21). Although he anticipates criticisms of this morality without foundations (Bauman, 1996: 58), he does not explain how, if certainty is now impossible, we can retain the conceptual possibility of an 'authentic' certainty against which an inauthentic, made-up, variety can be contrasted.

According to Bauman, the insecurity and anxiety associated with moral uncertainty make 'guarantees of righteousness', an attractive option for some (Bauman, 1993: 56), particularly in terms of taking away, or removing the need for, the 'agonies of choice' (Bauman, 1997: 184). However, to take such an option, and to evade the humbling uncertainties, is to exit the realm of morality altogether. It is fair to say that, in asserting such things, Bauman ignores the possibility that in order to be taken seriously morality has to deny that it is contingent and perspectival and has to claim the certainty implied by speaking in relation to 'the facts' (Poole, 1991: 114-5).

Another important aspect of Bauman's conception of morality, which has already been touched upon and is interesting particularly in relation to the discussion of Luhmann (see below), regards what it means 'to be moral'. According to Bauman (1993: 1): "To be moral" does not mean "to be good", but to exercise one's freedom of authorship as a choice between good and evil'. Moreover: 'Being in a

moral situation means no more than a *possibility* of being good (or of being evil, for that matter)' (Bauman, 1998: 17). This is where the uncertainty is relevant, but it also has implications regarding the orthodox understanding of morality as 'the good'. Instead, for Bauman it concerns both 'the good' and 'the bad', and the simultaneous possibilities thereof.

Bauman's version of morality originates from a pre-social impulse, and is fundamentally about the importance of responsibility *for* the other, and, based upon his reading of the work of Emmanuel Levinas, also an acceptance of our responsibility for that responsibility (Bauman, 1998: 17). This involves an opening up of the self, but one which contains no expectation of reciprocity (Bauman, 1993: 48; 1997: 62) – the contractual aspect often thought to characterise social relations is almost entirely absent. It therefore sets up, and embraces, a deliberately asymmetrical relation, and involves the deliberate abandonment of freedom (Bauman, 1993: 60). As such, *being for* is contrasted with the more symmetrical relationship implied by *being with*, which is non-moral (Bauman, 1993: 50).

In a Durkheimian critique of Bauman, Shilling and Mellor (1998: 199) claim that his suspicion of abstract ethical systems is fundamentally derived from a methodological individualism, which sees collectivities as threatening to individual freedom. In stark contrast, Durkheim (1984: 184) claimed that 'We cannot give ourselves over to other people, absolutely and utterly, without an abandonment of ourselves.' Under such an understanding, with its completely different conception of the individual, *being for the other* in Bauman's sense is virtually impossible.

The absence of attention to reciprocity has come in for notable criticism from Junge (2001), who asserts that, along with the sense in which morality rests on little more than a pre-social 'impulse', it means that Bauman has actually failed to develop a *sociology* of morality (Junge, 2001: 110). According to Junge (2001: 114), without reciprocity morality becomes: 'only the random outcome of aggregations of individual actions', and takes on an undue fragility.

There is something unimaginative about this as a criticism of methodological individualist theory, but Junge (2001: 110) does have an important point to make when emphasising the problematic way in which Bauman's account disregards 'connectability'. Junge proposes that we add reciprocity, intersubjectivity and solidarity to Bauman's theory, which leads to a situation in which: 'responsibility understood as a form of compassion is no longer conceived as a pre-social impulse, but as a social prerequisite of society also establishing reciprocity as a mutually binding glue in society' (Junge, 2001: 117).

My 'objection' to Bauman's account is not primarily related to the absence of reciprocity as a bad thing in normative terms (for society), but in more analytic terms (for sociology). My problem relates to the way that Bauman does or does not enable particular understandings of reciprocity, not one that worries about the implications of *being for the other* without regard to reciprocity in terms of it being better or worse for the continuance of (a particular) social order.

Without a detailed theorisation of connectivity, it would seem questionable how much insight is to be gained from pursuing Bauman's version of morality with regard to how it would operate in practice – how it would work? In Bauman's defence he does make some references to the Schutzian notion of the 'reciprocity of perspectives' and its importance for sustaining a sense of a shared and mutually intelligible social world (see Bauman, 1997: 9), however, we are still in the dark regarding the extent to which his morality does (or does not) already operate, and how it could do so without some version of reciprocity.

Bauman's account therefore suffers from a similar difficulty to Habermas' notion of 'discourse ethics'. We can perhaps imagine how the practice might work if fully realised, and we might (dependent upon political commitments) choose to view such a projected world as much better than this one, but how might we get there? If we attempt to 'be for the other', or were to act as if reaching a consensus and the avoidance of systematic distortions of communication were orientated

to by all, we would probably very soon find out that we were seriously disadvantaged, because few others were acting upon the same basis. Of course, the selflessness that seems to be part of the idea of being for the other is probably intended as part of the virtue, but there is something about this that does not really sit well with a sociological understanding of the interrelatedness of human conduct – how are we to understand human actions sociologically if they are no longer thought to be directed towards the conduct of others?

Of course the recognition of a right to bid for recognition involved in extending an ‘invitation to dialogue’ (Bauman, 2001: 80) would seem highly laudable, since dialogue which ‘connects without enforcing uniformity’ (Levine, 1995: 328) is widely thought of positively. However it would seem ill advised to make the extra step of moving in the direction of meeting someone halfway if they exhibit no intention of doing the same, since the mid-way point between you (perhaps the most likely location of any compromise) will then be closer to their starting point than yours! Similarly it would arguably seem disadvantageous, at least in a context involving competition of any kind, to open yourself to the ‘other’, and *be for* them if they are unwilling to extend you the same courtesy.

With regard to morality more broadly, as Weeks (1996: 152) puts it: ‘Moral pluralism can work only if individuals and groups are prepared to accept that a condition of freedom for their way of life is a tolerance of others’. Without that sort of reciprocity, or at least some understanding of how it does, or does not, work, things seem too intangible to be much use analytically, and seems like a recipe for the ‘triumph of the stubborn’ (Rescher, 1993: 59).

Rather than entering debate at the point of questioning whether Bauman has conceived of morality correctly or not, I propose to look at how particular evaluations are defended, reinvigorated, or undermined – a concern with the dynamics of their invocation or contestation. This, however, requires an understanding of the interrelatedness between discursive contributions, and therefore more of an understanding of connectivity than Bauman can provide.



## ***2.2. Foucault and Luhmann***

While this project has been significantly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann, I recognise that there are various problems associated with their bodies of work. For example, Sibeon (2004: 6) accuses both of reification, with Foucault accused of reifying 'discourse' and Luhmann reifying his notion of 'autopoiesis'.

My appropriation of Luhmann in particular is somewhat 'dangerous'. He is considered a relativist, if not a conservative, and his work 'defies a pick-and-choose approach' (Blühdorn, 2000: 339). Nevertheless, his attention to the significance of distinctions, has been key to the development of my observational processes.

Some have advanced injunctions against appropriating Foucault's work sociologically because it underestimates the 'storage' of power (Sibeon, 2004: 70), allegedly tends towards an essentialist conception of power, and divorces discourse from both reality and subjectivity (Fox, 1998: 419). Nevertheless, I intend to make use of it, particularly in terms of its understanding of the interconnections between concepts and the ways in which people are understood as being incited into having particular relations with themselves.

Whilst both theorists are anti-humanist in emphasis (indeed human beings are completely absent from Luhmann's theory), I do not believe that this makes it impossible to understand how their work might apply to people. I think that many of the criticisms and misunderstanding of their output result from the way that their anti-humanism makes it extremely difficult to understand how the ideas they articulate can be related to people's experiences. Hopefully this project, with its emphasis upon discursive 'difficulty' might make a small indirect contribution to connecting some of their ideas to the way that people can understand some of their discursive experiences.

As Potter (1996: 87) points out, the relationship between Foucault's conception of discourse and a specific piece of talk or writing is unclear, and the same could be said of Luhmann. Hopefully

the use to which I will put their work may help to clarify one way of conceiving of such a relationship.

Despite the regular division of Foucault's work according to the alleged discontinuities in his relative emphasis, I believe there to be important interconnections and continuities which makes an appropriation of Foucault's work in general terms legitimate, and it is to his work that I turn initially.

### **2.2.1. Foucault's Archaeology**

Much of Foucault's (1972) earliest work was preoccupied with an 'archaeological' method, a means of understanding a particular domain of knowledge – a system of dispersion – and its circulation of objects, statements, concepts, strategies and functions – what he called a discursive formation. What we should study are the 'mode of existence: the modifications and variations within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution and appropriation' of discourse (Foucault, 1977a: 137), i.e., the way that a system of dispersion operates and changes.

From this theoretical perspective, discourse is understood as autonomous from human beings in the sense that discursive events are: 'independent of the intentions and temporality of the consciousness that was the vehicle for its appearance' (Bernauer, 1990: 106; Foucault, 1991a: 59). Rather than being the expression of the will of an individual, statements position subjects – it is through statements that subject positions can be assigned (Foucault, 1972: 91).

According to Andersen (2003: 16) the central regulating difference within Foucault's archaeology is that between regularity and dispersion – a discursive formation being a set of statements dispersed with a degree of regularity. What matters is the existence of an underlying logic governing the possible relations between statements, functions, strategies, objects, subject positions and their degree of acceptability or legitimacy. As such, discourse 'is not a place into which the subjectivity irrupts; it is a space of differentiated subject-positions and subject functions' (Foucault, 1991a: 58). A

person does not speak; instead, by speaking a particular type of someone becomes available for observation.

When it comes to a specific discursive formation, there is a series of questions to be asked in pursuit of understanding its sense of cohesive dispersion. Important questions concern the formation of:

*Objects* (What is the object of knowledge? What are the social sites in which it emerges? Who is authorised to define it?) *Enunciative Modalities* (Who can produce the knowledge of this object? From which institutional sites? What is the relationship between the producer of the knowledge and the object?) *Concepts* (What are the logical and methodological rules? On what criteria are statements accepted or discarded? Which concepts are mobilised from other discursive formations?) *Strategies* (Which overarching theories or themes are deployed? Which theories from other discursive formations do they articulate with? What functions does the discourse play in related fields of non-discursive practices?)

(López, forthcoming; also see Rose, 1998: 174; O’Leary, 2002: 150).

My analysis will not proceed via formally addressing such questions, partly because I am not directly assessing the ‘Iraq Crisis’ as a discursive formation. Nevertheless, it will become clear that similar questions are important to what I am analysing, particularly those relating to the enunciative modalities and strategies at work in the material I analyse. How does articulation occur, and from what positions can legitimate contributions be made?

### **2.2.2. The Limits of the Sayable**

One important implication of pursuing an archaeological method is that there are limits placed upon what can be said within any discursive formation – the limits of the *sayable* (Foucault, 1991a: 59), under which discourse ‘is constituted by the difference between what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said’ (Foucault, 1991a: 63). This difference is a central issue, and can arguably benefit from an encounter with Luhmann (see below).

Foucault's associated conception of the 'order of discourse' has been appropriated by various others to account for the restriction or structuring of available meanings. For example, within critical discourse analysis it is regarded as the 'social structuring of semiotic activity' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 58) which 'limits the generative power of language by precluding certain connections' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 151).

The generative logic of a particular order of discourse limits what can be said, what connections can be made:

an 'order of discourse' creates its own disorder: by a string of rules, it establishes a profile of normality which functions as an exclusion mechanism and assumes the existence of a whole teratology of knowledge. Those who do not keep to these rules disqualify themselves. Their speech is neither true nor false because it is located outside 'the true'

(Visker, 1995: 113).

Not only are there epistemological limitations upon the possible, but, I would argue, it makes sense to also acknowledge, limitations to do with valuation – ones that are not entirely excluded in the sense of being 'impossible', but that are possible but unacceptable.

Appreciation of such issues could be achieved by introducing a more sociologically or culturally sensitive dimension, or through connecting it to Kober's (1997) notion of 'moral certainty' (see below).

It is claimed that, to be accepted, to be considered credible, any statement 'must be produced according to norms of legitimacy' (Butler, 1997: 151). Therefore every expression, every piece of discourse produced is 'always already censored' (Butler, 1997: 134) as a condition of its intelligibility, and this occurs via application of a distinction between the permissible and impermissible (Butler, 1997: 139).

Given the proximity of Foucault's archaeology to the paradigm known as structuralism, and its associated anti-humanism, direct reference to people and human experience is almost completely absent

from much of Foucault's work. Language, therefore is seen as having a social life separate from individual people, which:

exceeds the purview of the subject who speaks it' [...] One cannot know in advance the meaning that the other will assign to one's utterance, what conflict of interpretation may well arise, and how best to adjudicate the difference

(Butler, 1997: 87-8).

If it is legitimate to deviate from the anti-humanism slightly and consider how people relate to this experientially, then this is best thought of as a form of 'pressure' (May, 1995: 33) upon individuals regarding their conformity (in a non-repressive sense, of course) to external social practices of evaluation.

### 2.2.3. Power, Governmentality and Risk

An alternative, or rival, to the literature concerned with reflexive modernization, that also pays attention to the contemporary significance of 'risk' has arisen out of the development of some of Foucault's later work on 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991a; 1991b; 1991c).

Developing themes from his genealogy of modern forms of power (power/knowledge), this body of work treats risk explicitly epistemologically, claiming that 'the significance of risk lies not with risk *itself* but with what risk gets attached to' (Dean, 1999: 177). The significance of risk and uncertainty lie in their use as techniques of government – a means of disposing people to behave in particular ways, fostering particular forms of subjectivity to enable governing via the future (O'Malley, 2000: 460-1). For example, 'what if...?' arguments, can be used to give a moral quality to deliberation over a variety of practices regarding 'safety', ranging from smoking, to the use of mobile phones, in pursuit of shaping conduct in particular ways.

Consistent with his earlier work on the genealogy of modern forms of power/knowledge, and an understanding of power as a

productive phenomenon consisting of ‘action upon other actions’ rather than upon people, Foucault (1983: 220; also see Foucault, 1978: 92-102; Foucault, 1979: 194; Deleuze, 1999) advanced a version of government not observing domination, but a more productive process of ‘disposing things’:

With government it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved

(Foucault, 1991c: 95).

Foucault saw such more subtle techniques as more efficient than more overt forms:

A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas; it is at the stable point of reason that he secures the end of the chain; this link is all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work

(Foucault, 1979: 102-3).

It is fair to acknowledge that paragraphs such as this one are what make people assume that, despite the complexity of his analysis, all power/knowledge works in favour of the state (see Fox, 1998).

Regardless, associated with such an understanding is Foucault’s radical and controversial anti-humanist conception of the ‘self’ as a historically defined, and profoundly technological notion, as nothing more than the ‘the historical correlation of the technology built in our history’ (Foucault, 1993: 222). The panoptic logic of ‘discipline’ is a process of individualisation which circulates locations in a network of other relations (Foucault, 1979: 146, 304), the trajectory of which is to reduce complexity – to make a multiplicity more manageable (Foucault, 1979: 219).

Accepting this general account of the way government operates, subsequent authors have focussed upon developing an 'analytics of government' which could develop an understanding of the operation of the techniques through which it is pursued, establishing how we might relate to such techniques and their associated 'regimes of practices' differently (see Dean, 1999: 36).

It is argued consistently that one of the primary ways in which we are governed in these ways is by being produced as subjects of particular types, with specific ways or relating to our 'selves'. Such possibilities, along with their strong relation to the contemporary importance that psychology has achieved due to its 'generosity' (Rose, 1999: 267; Rose, 1998: 87) have been explored by Rose (1998: 114):

practices of management of individuality [...] do not work principally or exclusively by repression or domination. Such practices also, and more characteristically, seek actively to produce subjects of a certain form, to mold, shape, and organize the psyche, to fabricate individuals with particular desires and aspirations

As Butler (1997: 33) puts it in a distinct but related context, the effect of such interpellation is 'not descriptive, but inaugurative'. Naming and processes of identification are not fixative, as much as the giving of 'a certain possibility for social existence' (Butler, 1997: 2) – they primarily do not limit as much as bringing something about. Identification has become one of the primary means by which self-government is instigated and incited (Dean, 1999: 200), and issues surrounding this which relate to the importance of 'ethics' are discussed below.

Because they are derived from a Foucauldian conception of power, the production of selves, dispositions and practices involved in these conceptions of government are *not* criticised as constituting a 'loss' of freedom. The issues are not to be studied as automatically undesirable or illegitimate:

To analyze the relations between 'the self' and power, then, is not a matter of lamenting the ways in which our autonomy is suppressed by the state, but of investigating the ways in which subjectivity has become an essential object, target, and resource for certain strategies, tactics, and procedures of regulation

(Rose, 1998: 153).

Aside from objections to the conception of the 'self' implied by such accounts, one significant criticism is that it does not attend sufficiently to the responses that people make to such techniques (Lupton, 1999: 102). Given that Foucault claimed that power always implied resistance – indeed resistance was 'internal' to it (Foucault, 1978: 96) – it is in some ways surprising that attention is not paid to the specific ways in which people might resist. Instead, there is arguably a willingness to leave things at the general level and not pursue this in depth. I am attempting to attend to this very failure by examining some of the ways that participants in public debate resist the ways in which they are identified, and the means through which they are asked to confront, examine and discuss themselves.

#### **2.2.4. Morality and the Art of Ethics**

An important dimension of the governmentality literature, and an issue that preoccupied Foucault's later work was the significance of ethics and their importance vis-à-vis one's relations with oneself.

In his studies of the emergence of sexuality as a discursive formation, Foucault made reference to processes of 'moral subjectivation' which included the ways in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves in particular ways (Foucault, 1985: 29). He describes morality as a 'prescriptive ensemble', but as also referring to:

the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: the word thus designates the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a presumption; the manner in which



they respect or disregard a set of values. In studying this aspect of morality, one must determine how and with what margins of variation or transgression individuals or groups conduct themselves in reference to a prescriptive system that is explicitly or implicitly operative in their culture, and of which they are more or less aware.

(Foucault, 1985: 25-6).

However, he also asserted that for the ancient Greeks moral reflection was much less related to codes of the permitted and prohibited than with 'characterizing the type of attitude, of relationship with oneself that was required' (Foucault, 1985: 209). It was about a relation with oneself not with a code to be followed.

The realm of ethics is construed as consisting of the: 'means by which individuals come to construe, decipher, act upon themselves in relation to the true and the false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable' (Rose, 1998: 153). According to Rose (1999: 245) the practices of the self associated with this can be organised into a 3-fold distinction, adapted from Foucault, which include: 'moral codes' – which map a piece of ethical territory; 'ethical scenarios' – the contexts in which such codes are administered; and 'technologies of the self' – the various models of self-examination used to accomplish the necessary transformations.

In partial contrast, Dean (1999: 17) asserts four components: the governed ethical substance (ontology), the governing or ethical work (ascetics), the governable or ethical subject (deontology), and a *telos* (teleology) – making up processes of 'self-government'.

Regardless of the composition of each specific model of the elements in play, all these notions direct us to a particular logic that exerts productive pressures upon individuals' relations with themselves, making us: 'evaluate ourselves according to the criteria provided for us by others' (Rose, 1999: 11). Conceptions of normality, or example, are evaluations with an accompanying *telos* – they contain 'not only a judgement about what is desirable, but an injunction as to a goal to be achieved' (Rose, 1999: 133). One is not merely made aware of standards, but is incited to assess oneself in

relation to them and address any gap between them and oneself by working upon oneself to reduce its size.

Despite Foucault's aversion to outlining normative principles, an approval of particular forms of self-relation allegedly present in ancient Greece permeates his work in this area, and makes comprehensible his preference for ethics over morality (in a manner completely opposite to Bauman's understanding of them).

This establishes ethical relations with the self as approximately an almost artistic process – 'an 'aesthetics of existence' (O'Leary, 2002: 173), or an 'aesthetics of living' (May, 1995: 68), or an 'ethics of passion' – an art of not being moral and not being governed (Robinson, 2003: 123).

Although the trajectory of such possibilities implied in Foucault's work attracts the allegation that Foucault reduces all manifestations of culture to 'problems of style' (Privitera, 1995: x), others see it as potentially preferential to our current conception of morality.

For example, May (1995: 144-5) claims that there are 3 'freedoms' to be gained by a shift towards an 'aesthetics of living' – from a certain bondage to the moral, a freedom 'for' (the self becoming a canvas upon which creation can occur) and the potential for community construction. The freedom this would entail is one entirely without guarantees: 'We, like the artist, have no model to follow which will guarantee a good, or a beautiful, result.' (O'Leary, 2002: 132).

Associated with this is an ethos, an imperative, to surpass the limitations imposed upon us from the outside: 'it is a question of continually breaking the limits of the rigid object-like forms of subjectivity which are given to us by our culture – even when these forms are self-imposed' (O'Leary, 2002: 133).

Whilst the governmentality literature attends to the ways in which we are encouraged to relate to ourselves in particular ways – the ways we are governed – this interpretation of Foucault's work on ethics is aimed at pursuing a greater ability to affect ourselves

(Robinson, 2003: 121) – the ability to transgress and change ourselves – a critical form of freedom including an ability to transgress the limits applying to you and become different (Patton, 2000: 85).

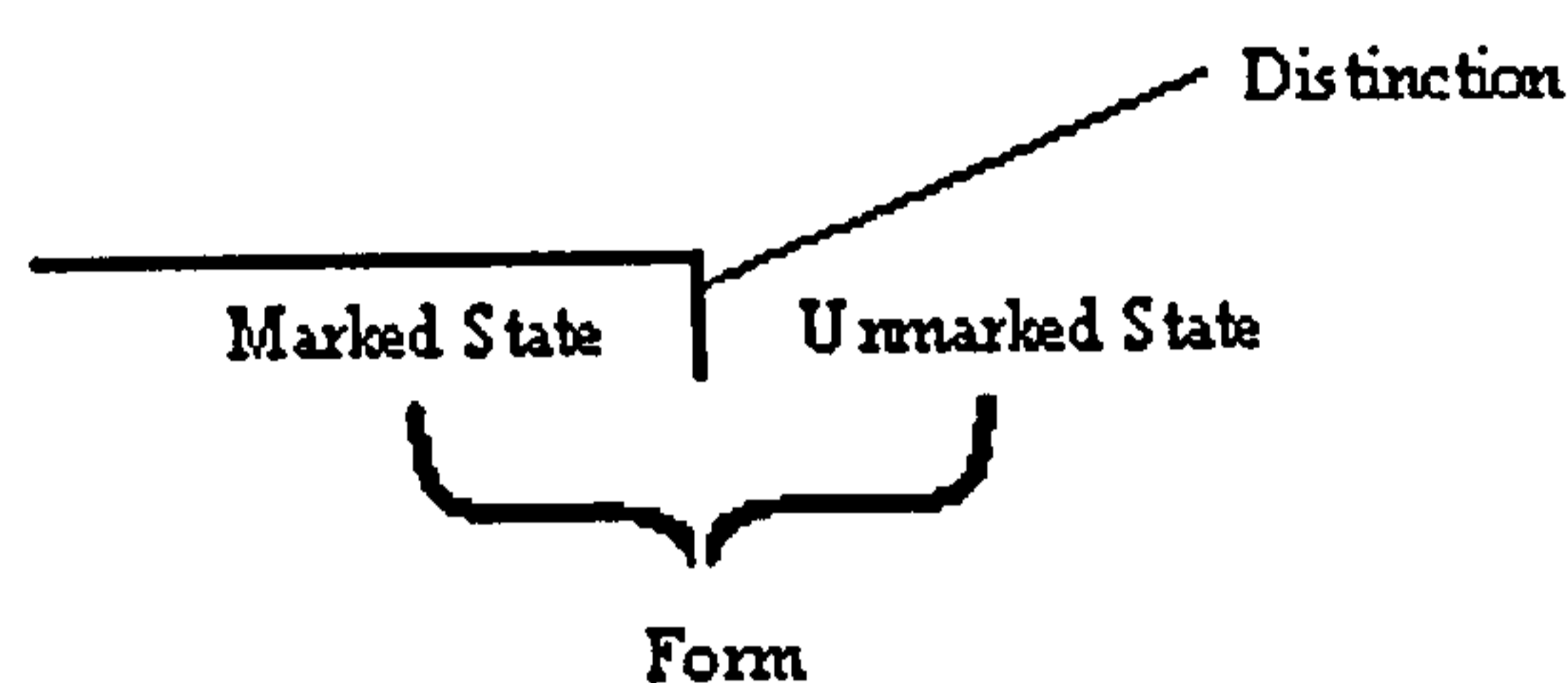
### 2.2.5. Luhmann's Systems Theory

Systems theorist Niklas Luhmann's conception of modernity is one of an evolutionary process which has unfolded via the functional differentiation of a variety of subsystems (law, politics, mass media, religion, art, economy etc) in order to facilitate the management of societal problems. These systems are arranged heterarchically – there is no top, no centre, no system with ultimate authority, and each such system reproduces itself recursively (via *autopoiesis*) by operating on the basis of a specific code (legal/illegal, government/opposition, information/non-information transcendent/immanent, beautiful/ugly, payment/non-payment etc.) which steers communication, and an associated programme implementing the code – giving the code content – although system codes rarely exist in a completely pure form (King and Thornhill, 2003: 25).

Luhmann's theory is organised around a central distinction between a *system* and its more complex *environment*, and each system is operationally closed to the others and exists only in their environment. These systems are orthogonal, and do not interact with one another other than via the perturbations and irritations that they create via a type of structural coupling – a reciprocal irritation (Luhmann in Rasch, 2000a: 208). Each only 'knows' the others via an internal construction of organized complexity.

Luhmann's epistemology, known as radical constructivism or second-order cybernetics, draws heavily upon insights from biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, and mathematician George Spencer Brown. It views communication as the operation of drawing a distinction – a cutting up of the world – which not only indicates one side but, from the point of view of a second order observer, also mobilises the other side of that distinction.

All communication proceeds via a synthesis of three selections – information, utterance and understanding (Luhmann, 1995: 137), and is also reliant upon a fourth selection – that of acceptance/rejection (Luhmann, 1995: 147) on the part of the ‘recipient’ (also see Rasch, 2000c: 25). However, in communication, what is at stake is not the transmission of something, but the drawing of a distinction – dividing the world up in some way – according to what is (claimed to be) the case, and what is not. Spencer Brown (1979) calls the unity of such a distinction a ‘form’, and it can be represented as follows:



(Figure 1: ‘The Form of Distinction,’ from Baecker, 2001: 69).

Such a form refers to everything ‘contained’ by a given distinction (Baecker, 1999: 3), and any observation ‘creates information by making such a distinction’ (Rasch, 2000a: 52). In ‘indicating’ (mobilising) one half, any observation, in effect, hides the other half – it becomes an unmarked space (Luhmann, 1998: 80), a ‘black box’ which is only amenable to observation by another (second order) observer, who also creates his or her own blind-spot in making such an observation.

### 2.2.6. Morality as a Code

According to Luhmann, systems offer certainty by communicating only about their own communications and providing explanations for the disappointment of its expectations (King and Thornhill, 2003: 31) – treating its own communications as reality. For Luhmann, morality is a social system, with a particularly close relationship to uncertainty

in allowing people to act *in spite of* uncertainty (Luhmann, 1987: 94), yet it also possesses a uniquely negative potential.

As a social system, morality has a rather strange status in the sense that it can operate as a bacterial infection, parasitic invader (Rasch, 2000a: 127), or virus which can attach itself to other social systems with very negative consequences. Luhmann views morality as a: ‘a *symbolic generalization* that reduces the reflexive *complexity* of doubly contingent ego/alter relations to expressions of esteem’ (Luhmann, 1995: 236, original emphasis). Instead of having a stable substantial content, here we are concerned with morality as a form involving the application of a code good/bad, articulated through communication via the distinction right/wrong (Thyssen, 1992: 35), approval/disapproval (Rasch, 2000b: 91), praise/blame (Luhmann, 1995: 82), or esteem/contempt (Luhmann, 1995: 156).

It is a code operating according to the unity of the distinction good/bad:

The moral is [...] a specific distinction, a form with two sides: good and bad, or taking internal commitments into account, good and evil. Such a positive/negative opposition can never be reduced to a unity, except in the form of the paradox. Moralists, and indeed Durkheim himself, would have to assume that the distinction of good and bad is a good distinction [...] This is certainly not a logical conclusion and somebody with experience of living under totalitarian regimes [which Luhmann did] might well prefer to see the distinction of good and bad as a bad distinction.

(Luhmann, 1996: 30-1).

In the interests of autopoiesis, it is important that whilst one side of the distinction may be preferred, both sides of the distinction *can* be applied in an act of observation. The scope of the code’s application is ‘virtualized’ (Luhmann, 1993a: 76) with respect to both possibilities, and morality, as the unity of the two, can exist only if the possibility of the oscillation between them is kept open (Luhmann, 2002: 49). As such, there are no phenomena which are essentially ‘moral’, instead, their moral status comes from the drawing of a contingent distinction

between good/bad. Whilst as the above quotation suggests, moralists would view the good/bad distinction as intrinsically good itself (also see Luhmann, 2002: 39), Luhmann is much more ambivalent about it – it is highly productive, but potentially dangerous.

Such an orientation opens up many possibilities for criticism beyond the regular assertion that Luhmann is a relativist (which he deliberately and unashamedly was) or a conservative (more debateable) – that Luhmann’s theory is amoral (or even immoral), or that this virtualization of morality is itself dangerous.

### **2.2.7. The Role of Ethics**

Luhmann’s rejection of entrenched moral positions leads him to see a particular (defensive) function for ethics, which is to: ‘warn off morality’ (Luhmann, 1987: 94). Ethics assumes the role of a second order morality which subjects morality to its own code (Rasch, 2000a: 149), and works to prevent the good/bad distinctions which are drawn from automatically remaining good/bad the next time the distinction is drawn. As such, ethics becomes a protection against moralizing aimed at keeping open the possibility that it is wrong (also see Thyssen, 1992: 37).

According to Luhmann’s theory, it is particularly important that the code good/bad is not able to attach itself isomorphically or congruently to the steering code of any other social system, leading to that system’s paralysis, and disappearance (Rasch, 2000b: 91, also see Luhmann, 2002: 124) – and therefore de-differentiation. As such, for Luhmann, ‘good’ should attach itself to the distinction each code embodies (Luhmann, 2002: 92), and therefore the prevention of each systems’ disappearance. Neither half of a distinction is always good, but the continued availability of both sides is. Therefore, for Luhmann, the key role for ethics, is to keep morality in check by responding to all moralizing with the question: ‘Why are you distinguishing in this way and not in another?’ (Luhmann, 2000: 120).

Thyssen (1992: 37) broadly takes up Luhmann’s view of the role of ethics as ‘insist[ing] on the limits of morals’. He then takes a

somewhat Habermasian turn in advocating that ethics be viewed as a procedure – the ethical process (Thyssen, 1992: 41) – which should exhibit a stable form, albeit with an unstable content, aimed at achieving a consensus (Thyssen, 1992: 42). Thyssen (1992: 38-9) sees a need for formal, abstract, shared rules, which can foster mutual expectations, not in relation to what constitutes morality, but instead in terms of the process by which decisions about morality are made. This resonates with the general consensus on acceptability that is necessary to the functioning of a truly radical pluralism (Weeks, 1996: 64). Here we are faced with a second order morality which would concern itself with the goodness and badness of the distinction right/wrong broadly in line with Luhmann's approach, but without guarantees.

Of particular interest to my project are Thyssen's brief discussions of controversies between groups with different moralities, and the lack of any compelling criteria of justification:

In a conflict between subcultures, no one subculture can force another to subscribe to its morals without violating the principle of tolerance and the right of each group to choose its identity [...] each subculture insists on being different and will refuse a neutral court of appeal

(Thyssen, 1992: 38).

The possibility of the lack of mutually accepted grounds evokes themes present within a variety of other work some of which I have already mentioned (MacIntyre, 1985; Weeks, 1996, Lyotard, 1988; Rasch, 2000a).

Whether or not we wish to accept all the particularities of Luhmann's theory, if we accept that distinctions are something of general social relevance, and that the distinction good/bad is a particularly significant code, we can perhaps see how the recurrent application of one of its sides to a particular putative phenomenon can stabilise somewhat. In the case of 'good' this may eventually lead to it gaining a status beyond question, and in the case of 'bad' place it in a such a position that attempting to label it 'good' may seem almost

nonsensical. Truths (moral or otherwise) can become sacred objects (Edwards *et al.*, 1995: 40), and, as such, take on an additional ‘moral’ character – a sense of goodness/badness regarding their acceptance or rejection – a type of doubling of their goodness.

A status can be achieved whereby they become practically ‘beyond question’ if one wishes to remain intelligible. For Fevre, this would be the case with respect to ‘commonsense’ attaining a hegemonic position as a basis for a distorted form of morality. Whilst Fevre terms this ‘demoralization’, Luhmann, would see this rather differently as merely a change in the ‘criteria of allocation’ (Luhmann, 1996: 31) but *not* a change in the persistence of morality (the code) itself. Indeed, unlike Fevre and others, he is more concerned with morality being too influential rather than not influential enough.

Whilst Luhmann’s concern about morality’s potential for paralysing other social systems contains an admission that the social world is potentially quite fragile, he also sees little possibility of any of our most persistent distinctions disappearing. For example:

[D]espite all the turbulences eroding tradition there is no serious likelihood of normality – that is to say, the distinction between normal and deviant – disappearing or of us having to lose our habit of observing society in terms of this distinction because it has ceased to be useful

(Luhmann, 1993a: *viii*).

In this regard, Luhmann observes a very important place for the mass media, particularly in terms of its ‘maintenance and reproduction’ (Luhmann, 2000: 31). However, he stresses that this does *not* mean that the media deterministically fix moral principles. Rather: ‘It is only the code of morality which is reproduced, in other words the *difference* of good and bad, or evil, behaviour’ (Luhmann, 2000: 31, original emphasis). The most obvious way in which the code undergoes a rejuvenation, is in relation to the ‘scandals’ (usually related to finances or sexuality) which are such a prominent part of much media coverage (Luhmann, 2000: 80).



It is not simply that: 'In the spectacle of public condemnation of the abnormal, the potency and pervasiveness of normality is reactivated [...] the self-judgement of each of us against its standards is mobilized' (Rose, 1999: 208). Rather, the disapproval helps to reconstitute the unity of the code, and contribute to its perpetuation – the code is reproduced as a distinction that can be drawn again.

More generally it is not simply the application of the code good/bad that involves the attribution of approval/disapproval, but also the communicative process, and here we perhaps have another way of thinking about the moral aspects of intelligibility. According to Rasch (2000a: 93-4) Luhmann also asserts that: 'the moral code [...] has the additional function of inhibiting or "suggesting away" [...] the freedom it produces by coding approval or disapproval of the consequences of communication'. An utterance apparently contains an approval/disapproval regarding whether or not what is communicated should be taken on board, and accepted as valid.

Luhmann (1995: 235) also notes the way in which the operation of morality can provoke conflicts, and subsequently impede their resolution. In this respect Luhmann's ideas link with Luckmann's (1996) account of the risk of dissensus accompanying moral communication, particularly in terms of the polarisations that can develop:

[T]he moral colouring of communications is also risky, because it leads to a rapid fixation of positions, to intolerance, and to conflict. A communication presents itself as being moral, if it suggests or explicitly states that self-esteem, or the esteem accorded to others relies upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. He [sic] who communicates morally in this manner implies that he cannot respect others, if they do not adhere to the communicated conditions; and he also puts his own self-esteem in jeopardy, he binds himself to the communicated morality and makes it more difficult for himself to revise his opinion in retrospect.

(Luhmann, 1987: 92).

Put more simply, morality: ‘works to promote conflict by clearly indicating that one’s position lies on the side of right and by the subjecting the opposing side to public rejection’ (Luhmann, 1995: 392). Hence moralistic approaches mobilise a ‘tendency to treat other people as enemies’ (Black, 1998: 144).

According to the interpretation of Rasch (2000b), based upon his understanding of Schmitt (1996), herein lies another danger, specifically in relation to politics:

If one lives by a fundamental ‘is/ought’ distinction, bemoaning the way things are and promulgating a utopic vision of the way things ought to be [...] then one will be tempted to coordinate this distinction with the political distinction, condemning those who oppose one’s own ‘ought’ as representing not a politically different position but rather the morally indefensible status quo. In this way the political will transform itself into [a] type of moral Armageddon [...] and only one side can win such a final battle.

(Rasch, 2000b: 163; also see Luhmann, 2000: 80).

Use of language such as ‘Armageddon’ may be hyperbolic, but the idea that positions can be fixed in such a way that common ground is unavailable might cause concern amongst those wanting to avoid violent forms of conflict. For those advocating dialogic relations, the good/bad distinction (morality) is perhaps often not a ‘good’ distinction to use!

### **2.2.8. Moral Certainty and Moral Asymmetry**

If we are in the territory of definitions of a situation obtaining a moral character, then we are not only potentially in the realm of Goffman (1959: 220) but also a variety of other approaches that may help with an understanding of some form of ‘definitional persistence’, in particular some associated with Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodology.

A variety of approaches have been developed under Garfinkel’s influence, developing an understanding of intelligibility and the need for individuals to account for themselves as a morally

and normatively significant phenomenon (Jayyusi, 1991). The reconsidered approach known as membership categorisation analysis, in particular, has focussed upon the importance of moral categorisation and moral accountability (Housley 2002: 6), and has even made tentative steps to connect its observations about the way that people manage perceived 'moral discrepancies' in their conduct to Luhmann's theories (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2003: paragraph 6.1). In particular such approaches tend to understand there to be a very close connection between processes of description and appraisal (Jayyusi, 1991: 233).

In an article drawing heavily upon Wittgenstein, Kober (1997) discusses what he calls epistemic and moral certainties. Whilst not easily distinguishable in practice (Kober, 1997: 373) in relative terms, the epistemic are concerned with the way that 'reality' is viewed, whilst the moral revolve around the evaluation of human actions (Kober, 1997: 378; on a similar issue see Barnsley, 1972: 47).

According to Kober (1997: 365):

Epistemic and moral certainties [are] constitutive rules of language games, such that they are unjustifiable, undeniable and serving as obliging standards of truth, goodness and rationality for members of a community engaging in the respective practices.

Within a specific language game particular rules and norms come into being and become constitutive of that game, taking on a determinant role within it:

Constitutive moral norms, i.e., moral certainties, of a moral language game M are not justifiable within M; instead they determine what counts as morally right or wrong (as good or evil) within M or what will be considered morally admissible or forbidden by members of a community being engaged in M.

(Kober, 1997: 374).

Moreover this has strongly exclusionary implications: 'Those who do not obey the moral norms of a moral language game M either do not practise M or will be excluded from it for being considered incompetent' (Kober, 1997: 375) – something obviously similar in implication to the 'order of discourse'. There are requirements before something can be 'inside'.

Again we are back to questions of intelligibility, and the dynamics (or otherwise) of the lack of availability of particular discursive locations or subject positions from which to speak. This does not necessitate that we view the discursive contributions made by an individual as determined, but does involve a recognition that within a particular practice, some potential arguments are more 'difficult' to make than others, not least because of the availability of sanctions in relation to the 'morality of intelligibility' – the limits of the sayable.

If we are interested in the dynamics of putting things beyond question, or making things more difficult to question, particularly in relation to morality, then I would argue that it makes sense to think about 'moral certainty', and to do so in a dual sense. According to this formulation moral certainty does not just refer to conviction, or certainty about the goodness/badness of a particular attitude or practice – that I believe that X or Y is wrong, and no argumentation will convince me otherwise. It would also make a slightly creative use of the legal meaning of the term. In a legal context, possession of moral certainty refers to the belief that something is beyond reasonable doubt – it is the criteria required for a jury to convict. As such it may make sense to invoke 'moral certainty' in reference to the definition of a situation as a matter of conviction, and involving the idea that, in relation to an established definition some ideas, statements and subject positions are beyond the bounds of reason. It is possible that a person has moral certainty about the goodness of the 'protection of children', the badness of Saddam Hussein, or the presence of weapons of mass destruction inside Iraq, but it is also possible that it can become *beyond reasonable doubt that these are at stake* in a particular context. If such definitions become a matter of moral certainty, and attempting

to engage in dialogue with them on any other grounds might be rather unproductive. It is possible to be excluded entirely and rendered illegitimate and unintelligible that way, or rendered illegitimate whilst being included, according to the logic of a moral asymmetry inside an order of discourse, or language game – not unintelligible, but intelligible as illegitimate.

In order to bring this issue into slightly better focus I will now clarify the sense in which I am attempting to link Luhmann and Foucault together.

### **2.2.9. Marking Space and the Repressive Presence**

Despite Luhmann's rejection of Foucault's work (See Harrison, 1995: 76), it is possible to see an affinity between aspects of their projects.

Rempel (1996: 83) makes an attempt to connect the two by adding Foucault's version of power/knowledge into Luhmann's systems theory, attempting to make Luhmann less one-dimensional by conceptualising systems as combining forms of power/knowledge. While he may have a point that system codes can be usefully viewed as 'the glue that binds power and knowledge together' (Rempel, 1996: 81), establishing a 'constraining principle of inclusion and exclusion', his implicit criticisms that Luhmann reduces multiple types of knowledge to a single one within each system is not entirely valid. It ignores Luhmann's recognition that communications can be more subtle than manifesting themselves directly in the form of a system's code – indeed it may be relatively rare to see them manifested that directly.

Andersen (2003: 12) notes a connection between the two in terms of a similarity between the 'enunciative function' in Foucault's archaeological work – the difference between actuality and possibility (Bernauer, 1990: 91) – and Luhmann's version of 'meaning' (Andersen, 2003: 12). If we accept Andersen's version of meaning, of possibility, as: 'a horizon that lines up with actualisation – something appears and thereby excludes other possibilities' (Andersen, 2003: 73), then the connection is clear.

More generally Pottage (1998: 3) notes Luhmann's affinities with Foucault (and Deleuze) in terms of their mutual interests in 'emergence' ahead of 'substance' and the ways in which 'structures, processes and theories [...] produce themselves out of their own contingency' (Pottage, 1998: 3; see Foucault, 1977b: 148-9). Pottage also claims that Luhmann could be considered to be Foucault's 'disclosing agent' (Pottage, 1998: 5) helping to make his work more specific, and there is a very particular sense in which I am in agreement with this.

In his discussion of Foucault's conception of power, and in an attempt to settle, or at least reconfigure, the question of whether power primarily produces or represses, Deleuze (1999: 29) claims that: 'Power "produces reality" before it represses.' To this we can respond by questioning whether it is necessary to decide which comes first – production or repression. Surely their virtual simultaneity is also a possibility, and it is in this area that the 'disclosing agent' metaphor is most appropriate. If it is the case that 'one phrase denies the existence of others, forbidding, contradicting or repressing them to such an extent that *each phrase remains pregnant with everything left unsaid*' (Deleuze, 1999: 2, emphasis added), then we can use Luhmann to make this slightly more specific. A statement is not pregnant with *everything* that is left unsaid, instead, it is pregnant with *a specific thing that is left unsaid* – the other side of a specific distinction or form, instead of which it is produced. While it may also be reliant upon other 'unsaid' things, the thing that is specifically unsaid has a different status to all those others which exist in the background. According to this, we can say that any particular example of the logic of the panopticon (assuming that it is successful) neither one-sidedly represses nor produces anything. Instead it produces particular types of compliant bodies *specifically instead of* specific unruly or non-compliant ones, and many other potential dimensions of those bodies are *ignored completely*.

In more Luhmannesque terms, when something is 'produced', it 'emerges' because of the drawing of a distinction, and something

else (the distinction's other side) is always in some sense repressed. All observations automatically involve a blind spot – what is simultaneously not seen/indicated/produced – as well as the space that is marked. Not only are all other possibilities absent, but also something specific – the unmarked space, the other half of the particular distinction – and some kind of governing, influencing, guiding, or shepherding potential is associated with such a process.

In Luhmann, there is a clear importance attached to what we might like to call an 'already'. Communications have to build upon and attach themselves to previous communications – that is the prerequisite for 'autopoiesis'. Whilst I do not want to invoke all of this, and although prepared to acknowledge the utility of aspects of Luhmann's theoretical instruments more generally, I am not sure that it is necessary to *automatically* invoke them in relation to every observable distinction.

The notion of an 'already' is also present in Foucault, specifically in reference to the relationship between manifest discourse and an 'already-said, which according to Foucault is simultaneously also a 'never-said':

[E]verything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said.

(Foucault, 1972: 25).

This repressive presence can be understood, and made even more specific by relating it to Luhmann's 'marked' and unmarked spaces. The quotation actually implies that Foucault was aware of the possibility of this more two-dimensional understanding, and it seems to me that accepting such a two-dimensional version of meaning production is a step on from the rather tiresome concern over whether power either produces or represses (or which comes first), and allows us to attend to the interdependence of inclusion and exclusion – their

virtual simultaneity. When people exhibit a sense of attachment to a particular definition of the situation, when they talk about something being the case, this understanding will allow perception of not only all the other possibilities that are excluded, but *the specific thing that is excluded* – the sense in which it is X rather than Y specifically that is the case. When such an attachment to one definition instead of another specific one is observable, it will be useful to think of it as a *moral asymmetry*, a difference that makes a difference in Bateson's (2000: 459) sense, but one that does so in an obviously moral (and probably strategic) sense. Such an asymmetry is in some sense internal to a specific order of discourse, a specific language game, a specific form, and the illegitimacy of any position in relation to it is *one inside it rather than outside*. It also relies upon distinctions being drawn between two things, one of which is 'preferred' morally. It does not necessarily require, however, that they are a clear dualism or 'disciplinary twins' in Connolly's (1983: 236-7) sense, although some may be relatively similar.

As already mentioned, the illegitimacy that can result is not an illegitimacy due to unintelligibility, but an illegitimacy due to being understood in a specific negatively valued way. One can be illegitimate by being unintelligible – outside a language game, a form or order of discourse – or by being intelligible in specific ways, according to particular moral asymmetries *inside* a discursive space.

This is where the possible experiential dimension comes in. If we assume that a discursive space (however you wish to understand it – as a discursive formation, a social system, a language game, an order of discourse) operates with a high degree of closure according to a limited range of morally asymmetric distinctions, and people are to some degree aware of this, then they are going to be aware of and subject to particular 'demands' made of them when they are engaged in discursive practices. Depending upon the way in which the discursive space has been set up, they will potentially be faced with specific forms of discursive difficulty.



In order to be a legitimate contributor to a specific space one has to first ensure that one can be understood as being *inside* it. Assuming that that can be successfully achieved, there is the possibility that one will nevertheless be understood as illegitimate 'inside' it – according to the devalued half of one of the distinctions in operation. In order to address the risk of being understood in a morally and strategically disadvantageous way, particular practices or statements may be required, and pressure placed upon an individual to produce them, something requiring that they relate to themselves in particular ways.

I will elaborate on the relevance to this understanding of moral asymmetry of the interrelated concepts of 'disclaiming' (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975) and 'ontological gerrymandering' (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985; Potter, 1996) in my Methodology chapter. Before getting to that, I will discuss some of the sociologically relevant literature engaging with aspects of the 'Iraq Crisis'.

### *3. Empirical Literature Review: War in/on Iraq*

#### *3.1. Introduction*

Central to this project are the problems people confront when arguing, and similar problems are faced when writing a PhD thesis. Given the highly controversial nature of the ‘Iraq crisis’, it is no surprise that much of the literature concerned with it is aimed directly at transforming the context itself. Many contributions are explicitly normative in approach – directly concerned with what should be the case – and my problem lies in establishing the boundary between the academic literature and the empirical materials deserving different forms of analysis.

Do I insist upon a clear separation, formulating criteria upon which to base the sorting process, thereby allowing greater credence to those allocated to the literature category and allowing its contents to elude my potentially deconstructive gaze? Alternatively, I could assert that there is no significant difference between the two types of material, in which case the status of a literature review is brought into question.

This problem is exacerbated by the proximity of my account to the events themselves, meaning that most accounts of the 2003 war have thus far been produced by people ‘inside’ the context – journalistic ‘eye-witnesses’ (Simpson, 2003; Omar, 2004), and politicians defending their own role in events (Cook, 2003; Short, 2004) or are driven directly by a vision of what should have happened.

My chosen means of dealing with this ‘problem’ of separating the empirical and literature components is most certainly *not* to claim that I have solved it satisfactorily. Instead, when it comes to those contributions concerned with the events of 2002 onwards I have tried to distinguish between those making contributions ‘about’ the controversy, and those doing so ‘within’ it in a way loosely approximating Luhmann’s distinction between first and second order observation. Nevertheless I freely admit that the distinction is less

than clear, since I am a contingent observer too. The materials could have been organised differently, and material drawn from some sources appear in this chapter *and* in relevant subsequent ones.

### **3.2. *Gulf War I and the Aftermath***

Any attempt at making sense of the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 is doomed to ahistoricism if it neglects to give some consideration to the ‘first’ Gulf War in 1991, the conclusion and aftermath of which created many of the conditions of possibility of the action 12 years later.

Although it is not my intention to engage in a detailed comparison of the two events, it is still necessary to probe the literature about it for any relevant insights. I will not be providing any great detail on the events that took place (a summary timetable of some of the many key events can be found in the Appendix), since the details are still a matter of intense controversy. What matters more here are those dimensions and themes present in accounts of the conflict which are most sociologically pertinent. Rather than dividing up the literature according to time, I prefer a more thematic approach which will largely involve discussion of both wars against Iraq together. Nevertheless, a few remarks focussing upon the first Gulf war and its aftermath are necessary.

The ‘first’ Gulf War (1991) has been understood in various ways, many considering it to represent something significantly new culturally. The presence of 24 hours news (CNN) demonstrated that we now inhabit a world in which mediation is of central importance in shaping human socio-cultural experiences in the West (Kellner, 1992). Not only were these changes purported to have occurred in relation to the news media specifically, but also in relation to morality and military technology (Askoy and Robbins, 1992) in terms of its emphasis upon ‘hygiene’ (Melling, 1995: 80; Kellner, 1992: 157), time and speed (Virilio, 2002), and the definition of war itself (Baudrillard, 1995). Moreover, it is seen as a key event in the

reconfiguration of global politics following the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War (Huntington, 1998: 251).

Schulte-Sasse and Schulte-Sasse (1991: 67-8) distinguish five locations for the analysis and critique of the 1991 war:

Long-term US power politics including military intervention in the third world; Inconsistencies in the official 'moral' legitimation of war; Disinformation campaigns; Long-term historical modernization processes in the Middle East; 'the importance of aestheticized experiences of collective unity and superiority for the cultural reproduction of U.S. society and of war as a means of simulating a unified body politic.

They characterise prevailing accounts as deficient due to an over-emphasis upon questions of power and propaganda to the detriment of cultural and ideological understandings: 'analysis of hegemonic power strategies and disinformation can become counterproductive if it fails to consider means by which current societies reproduce themselves culturally and ideologically' (Schulte-Sasse and Schulte-Sasse, 1991: 68). Their point is arguably valid in relation to the more recent conflict since most accounts thus far are (perhaps understandably) preoccupied with the allocation of the responsibility for how events unfolded, to the detriment of a more holistic understanding of how it was that things occurred in the ways that they did.

A variety of accounts exist of several dimensions of the build-up to the 'first' war, with others focussing upon the aftermath, especially the sense in which it did not resolve the issues at stake satisfactorily.

Virilio (2002: 137) claims that the war resulted in a 'transpolitical paradox':

he who was defeated (Saddam Hussein) did not lose the war, since he remains in power and retains his potential for harm. The war of *zero casualties* (or nearly, on the side of allies) was therefore also a *war of zero political victory* [...]

Whilst there was no doubt about the coalition's victory militarily, politically there was minimal change with Saddam Hussein retaining power despite uprisings in the south. Many accounts of the aftermath are critical on this point, arguing that the question of what was to come next was ignored or forgotten by the Bush government (Aburish, 2001: 307) – an accusation again made against his son's administration in 2003.

The UN resolutions passed in the war's aftermath, instituting the sanctions regime and the UNSCOM process inspecting Iraq's disarmament, were in many ways, according to Rai (2002: 182), an 'offer designed to be refused.' However, they were accepted as part of the ceasefire agreement, although it turned out that this acceptance did not necessarily mean that the Iraqi government intended to comply completely (Aburish, 2001: 316). Indeed, it is widely accepted that Iraq implemented a formulaic means of dealing with the inspections process, a pattern of 'Iraqi denials, followed by partial disclosure, followed by further investigation by the UN inspectors, leading to further Iraqi admissions' (Cockburn and Cockburn, 2002: 107). Such cynicism was an important theme in the controversy over the inspections process in 2002-3, and one reason advanced for the belief that Iraq would never fully comply.

Cynicism is something of which those in favour of the resolutions have also been accused. For example, Rai (2002: 177) claims that aspects of UNSCR 678 in particular 'add up to a set of goalposts that can be moved indefinitely'. A high degree of flexibility of application appears to exist in the interpretations made of the resolutions, such that they could be 'selectively re-invoked (or ignored) at will by America, and it now seems likely that this is precisely what may continue to happen indefinitely' (Merrin, 1994: 450). Ignored on and off for 11 years, the resolutions were re-invoked in 2002-3 to justify invasion and occupation of Iraq.

A high degree of asymmetry has existed in terms of the flexibility of interpretation allowed to the various parties. Whilst flexibility was afforded the US, Iraq was not allowed to object, or

deviate from the minutiae of what was required of it without being held morally accountable.

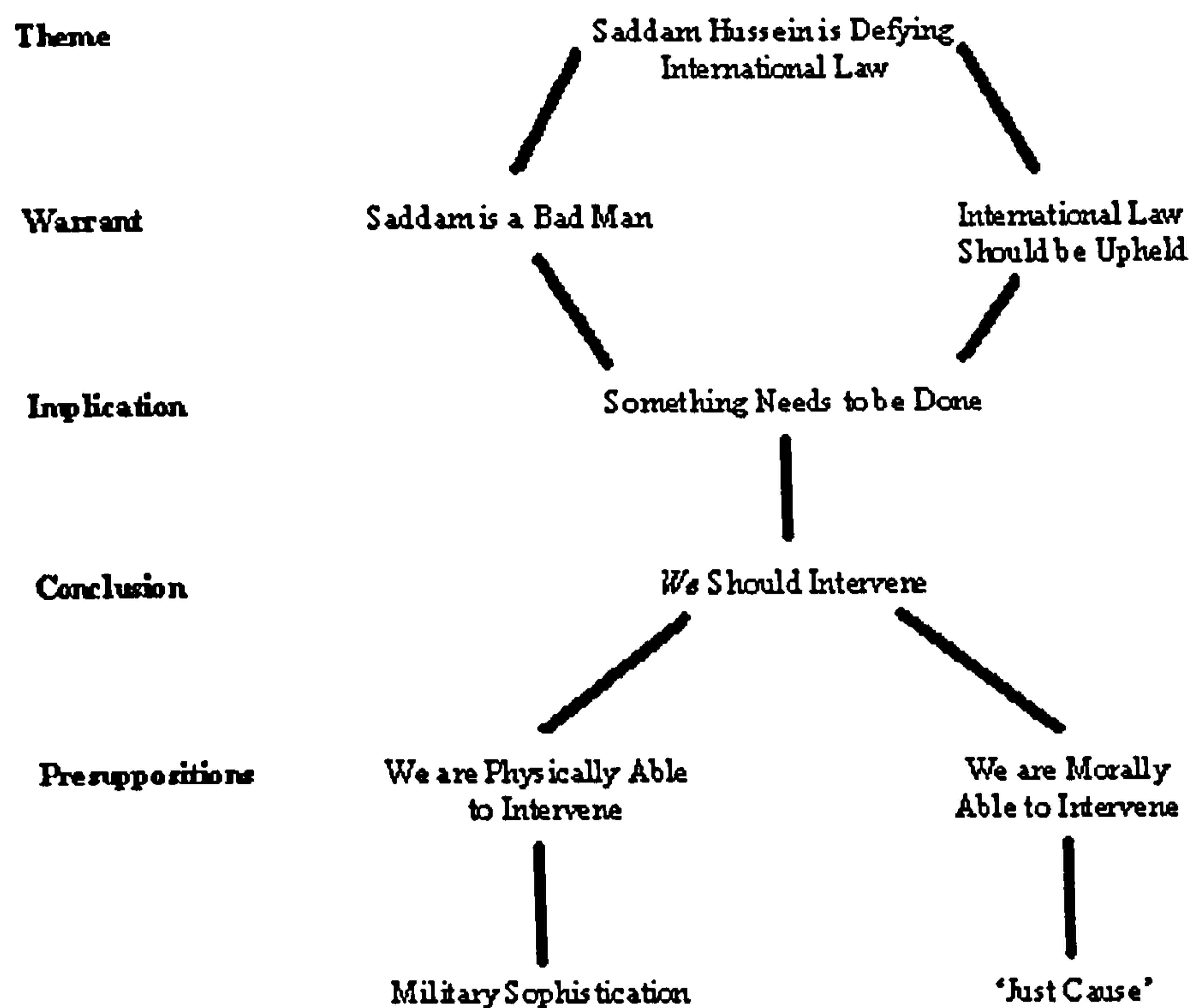
According to Richard Butler, head of UNSCOM in 1998 when the inspectors faced increased resistance to their activities, leading to what was known as 'Operation Desert Fox', Iraqi officials: 'increasingly deflected attention from their lack of cooperation in the disarmament process by using language that the diplomatic community would value: "sovereignty", "security", "dignity".' (Butler, 2000: 169). In the same account, Butler also expresses disapproval of Kofi Annan's attempts to undertake a 'comprehensive review' of the inspections process in late 1998, particularly on the grounds that it implied: 'a kind of moral equivalence between UNSCOM and Iraq' (Butler, 2000: 191; also see Trevan, 1999: 367) – any such symmetry was inappropriate.

The most comprehensive account of the discursive aspects of the process leading up to Operation Desert Fox – the four day US/UK bombing campaign in December 1998 – is Richardson (2004). Within a wider study of the representation of Islam within the UK broadsheet press he constructs the argument that underlying the coverage of the 'crisis' in 1998 was a: "Discourse of Military Intervention", in which the lexical, syntactic, semantic and structural choices in the texts are functional to their pragmatic role: justifying bombing Iraq and "removing" Saddam Hussein' (Richardson, 2004: 189).

Richardson analysed journalistic contributions to show the way in which relationships were set up between various elements within the context, and expectations fostered regarding what should happen. For example, he looks at the way in which the Iraqi perception of the crisis was often portrayed as determinant – amounting to the implication that if only they understand 'we' are serious about action then they would act in the way 'we' desire (Richardson, 2004: 166). Moreover, he notes that coverage of the build up to Operation Desert Fox concentrated upon 'Saddam's defiance of international law', implying that his agency was paramount, and also leading to a

situation in which ‘something needs to be done’ (Richardson, 2004: 156-7).

The propositional logic of the argument for military action in that case can be represented in diagrammatic form:



(Figure 1: ‘The Discursive Strategy in the Broadsheet Reporting of Iraq’, from Richardson, 2004: 156).

The significance of this ‘discourse of military intervention’, and the fact that the assumption that military action was appropriate permeated so much of the coverage, clearly makes such ideas applicable to the more recent controversy. According to Richardson, also present were a limited range of strategies contesting those dominant ones, which tended to focus on three main points: that Britain and the US were inconsistent in that they were not proposing to attack all countries breaking international law, the questioning of the accuracy of military technology, and arguing against the whole basis for military intervention, as well as the expression of a preference for non-violent approaches (Richardson, 2004: 178-181).

Whilst there is much to admire about the sophistication of Richardson's account, one slightly frustrating thing from my perspective is the confidence that he displays regarding what 'really' was the case. For example, Richardson professes to know whether or not the action that took place was legal or not:

Although the relevant Security Council Resolutions did not – and *do not* – authorise military attacks on Iraq, the Americans argued throughout the crisis that the decision for military aggression could be made without further recourse to the Security Council.

(Richardson, 2004: 159, original emphasis).

There is nothing wrong with taking this position, but asserting it as if it were a matter of certainty is problematic. There is no consensus (not even loosely) on what the various Security Council Resolutions applying to Iraq do and do not do, something which has been an ever-present source of controversy. It would almost be better to completely bracket the question of what the Resolutions are supposed to do, and leave to one-side the question of any gap between what should and does happen. A much better way of thinking about the issue is not deciding whether or not something really should have been allowed to happen, but: how was it able to do despite so many people asserting that it should not have done so?

Whilst the 1998 controversy, and war of 1991 set the scene for the 2003 invasion an important issue framing the context for the invasion is the 'war on terrorism', a discursive formation which merits some consideration.

### ***3.3. The 'War on Terrorism'***

A variety of accounts of the so-called war on terror(ism) (WoT) have been produced since it was launched, emanating from a multitude of disciplinary sources.

Two main interrelated themes can be identified in the accounts that exist – the alleged vagueness of reference of the phrase WoT in



terms of the definitions of ‘terrorism’ and ‘war’, and the apparent moral difficulty involved in criticising it.

### **3.3.1. Vagueness**

One way that the WoT has been thus far understood and criticised in scholarly discussions is its general vagueness, and suspicion about clarity is often present in attempts at undermining the whole process.

In his eyewitness account of the events of 9-11, the now Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams claimed that: ‘As soon as it was decided that the September atrocity was an act of war and that a ‘war on terrorism’ was to be undertaken, clarity disappeared’ (Williams, 2002: 37-8). He also claimed that it was unclear what would count as ‘victory’ within it (Williams, 2002: 32; also see Bauman, 2002: 86).

Chomsky, who has clear political reasons for objecting to the very idea of a WoT, puts his objections as follows:

To call it a ‘war against terrorism’, however is simply more propaganda, unless the ‘war’ really does target terrorism. But that is plainly not contemplated because Western powers could never abide by their own official definitions of the term, as in the U.S. Code or Army manuals. To do so would at once reveal that the U.S. is a leading terrorist state as are its clients.

(Chomsky, 2001: 16).

This is interesting for its identification of the two locations blamed for the lack of clarity – the definitions of both war and terrorism. He ironises both its status as a war, and the selective definition of terrorism involved.

### **3.3.2. Problems with ‘War’**

Various contributors have described the use of the term ‘war’ in the WoT as problematic, including Habermas (in Borradori, 2003: 34), who claimed that the frame was normatively and pragmatically a ‘mistake’. Others are less generous describing it as ‘dreadfully

misconceived' (Short, 2004: 267), or observe sinister motivations behind the classification – that it was 'propaganda', or 'doublespeak':

The idea of a 'war on terrorism' is itself a form of doublespeak. It reflects a now-pervasive habit of using war as a metaphor for all sorts of things that are not really wars at all [...]

Usually, the people who launch metaphorical wars realize at the outset that victory, as understood in real wars, will never happen [...]

Instead, what usually happens is that these wars develop permanent bureaucracies that drain resources and issue periodic exhortations to the public as a way of compensating for the fact that victory is nowhere in sight.

(Rampton and Stauber, 2003: 128).

Arguably, there is another dimension to the coming together of the terms war and terrorism, hinted at by Zulaika and Douglass (1996) in an account exploring terrorism's relationship to 'taboo' years before the events of 9-11. They claim that terrorism is often portrayed as 'war' in order to achieve acceptance of particular forms of counteraction: 'By casting terrorism in the guise of warfare, these unruly elements can be converted into the work of a full-fledged army against which an organized counteraction can be mounted' (Zulaika and Douglass, 1996: 82-3; also see Fuller, 2001: paragraph 1.11).

Since any interaction with terrorists is a taboo-violation (Zulaika and Douglass, 1996: x), violence is the only option. If terrorism and war are so very closely associated, having a 'war' on 'terrorism' is almost semiotically excessive, a doubling or repetition of meaning – a doublespeak, but not in the Orwellian sense meant by Rampton and Stauber.

### **3.3.3. Problems with 'Terrorism'**

The definition of 'terrorism' in circulation in the WoT has also been criticised, with Chomsky drawing a distinction between literal and 'propagandistic' uses of the term:

[A]longside the literal meaning of the term [...]: the term 'terrorism' is used to refer to terrorist acts committed by enemies against us or our allies. This propagandistic use is virtually universal. Everyone 'condemns terrorism' in this sense of the term. Even the Nazis harshly condemned terrorism and carried out what they called "counter-terrorism" against the terrorist partisans.

(Chomsky, 2001: 90).

Put more succinctly: 'Everyone condemns terrorism, but we have to ask what they mean' (Chomsky, 2001: 91).

Derrida (in Borradori, 2003: 102) meanwhile asserted the need for care in relation to both the terms 'terrorism' and 'international terrorism'. The vagueness of the referent leaves it open to abuse in the form of 'opportunistic' appropriations (Derrida in Borradori, 2003: 103-4). Moreover, arguably: 'the most powerful and destructive appropriation of terrorism is precisely its use as a self-evident concept by all the parties involved' (Borradori, 2003: 153). The danger is that everyone can think they are talking about the same thing, using the word in the same way, when actually very different conceptions are at work, leading to people appearing to accept the definitions of their opponents.

In this same interview Derrida spoke at length about the significance of the imposition of terminology:

The dominant power is the one that manages to impose and, thus, to legitimate, indeed to legalize (for it is always a question of law) on a national or world stage, the terminology and thus the interpretation that best suits it in a given situation.

(Derrida in Borradori, 2003: 105).

It has certainly come about that the vast majority of people, even those critical of the definition, understand the contemporary world situation somehow in relation to the 'war against terror(ism)' – accepting the reality of it as a process underway, something with particular reductive implications. The question of whether this has been 'imposed'

somehow is a separate question from whether such widespread acceptance has occurred.

It is perhaps helpful to view the definition of the WoT at work as a definition of no definition – the absence facilitating a high degree of plasticity of application, and working to the advantage of some participants.

### **3.3.4. Morality – Some Things One Must, or Must not, Say**

According to Derrida, the discourse associated with 9-11 actually calls for talk:

Not only is it impossible not to speak on this subject, but you feel or are made to feel that it is actually *forbidden*, that you do not have the right, to begin speaking of anything, especially in public, without ceding to this obligation, without making an always somewhat blind reference to this date

(in Borradori, 2003: 87; original emphasis).

There was a form of moral pressure to acknowledge and speak about 9-11, an incitement to express horror at its occurrence. The closely associated imperative to not say certain things was also observed by various sources.

As Crockatt puts it:

The war against terrorism separates the sheep from the goats: ‘Those not with us are against us,’ said President Bush. There is no comfortable middle ground. Indeed, it is arguably harder to find middle ground in the war against terrorism than it was in the war against communism.

(Crockatt, 2003: 163).

The absence of a middle ground available reflects the significance of the filtering capacity achieved by the for/against distinction, and makes it difficult to say certain things without negative consequences (feedback). Žižek (2002: 33), among others had pointed out that in relation to 9-11: ‘every explanation which evokes social circumstances

is dismissed as covert justification of terror'. All attempts at *understanding* or *explaining* the events get conflated with *justification*, and therefore also the marginalisation of those engaging in them (see Johnson, 2002: 223).

Žižek (2002: 144) understands this as an 'ideologico-political blackmail', claiming that its greatest catastrophe was Europe being drawn in by it, strengthening US hegemony. Whilst strongly resonant, the notion of 'ideologico-political blackmail' suffers from being a little too obviously critical – 'blackmail' leaves little doubt about the morality of any evaluation made – and the intensity of Žižek's hyperbole is exactly the sort of thing that appears to play into the hands of those attempting to marginalise dissent. To them he is saying that American deaths are less important than making sure the US is not hegemonic, a proposition that they would find it easy to deride.

Other critical contributors tended to be more careful about attempting to protect themselves from such marginalisation:

One can condemn unconditionally certain acts of terrorism (whether state or not) without having to ignore the situation that might have brought them about or even legitimated them [...]

One can thus condemn *unconditionally*, as I do here, the attack of September 11 without having to ignore the real or alleged conditions that made it possible.

(Derrida in Borradori, 2003: 106-7; original emphasis).

Here Derrida claims that explanation and justification are separate, and even emphasises his condemnation of 9-11 with italicisation. Such careful talk has been a very important part of the discourse of those criticising events since 9-11, and is one of the central themes of this thesis. An index of how far such moral problematisation had spread is that even Baudrillard (2002: 24), certainly not someone known for making concessions, tried not to appear unconcerned with the deaths of 9-11.

The intensity with which specific positions have been rendered morally problematic within the WoT is helped by the way that

'terrorism' viewed as unambiguously bad, as 'the hidden universal equivalent of all social evils' (Žižek, 2002: 111), or the 'ultimate bogeyman, the perfect taboo' (Zulaika and Douglass, 1996: 189). Terrorists appear inhuman, and those appearing to speak on their behalf are dehumanised to the extent that the subject positions from which they could speak are marginalised, and potentially important distinctions obliterated (also see Zulaika and Douglass, 1996: 98).

It is very important to try to understand the operation of this logic with respect to the invasion of Iraq, and the role it played in shaping many of the contributions made to the public debate. One likely site for its circulation is the mass media.

### ***3.4. The Role of the Media***

Various accounts produced in the wake of the 'first' Gulf War in 1991 have asserted the important role of the mass media in the conflict – both in the build-up and coverage of the war itself. Emergent from this literature is a concern with the media's influence upon events, including criticism of its role in relation to both conflicts. Much of this criticism has revolved around two interrelated issues – the relationship between the military and the press, and whether or not the press acted as 'cheerleaders' for war (Kellner, 1992: 1), circulating 'propaganda'.

#### **3.4.1. The Media's Relation to the Nation?**

One issue raised recurrently is the question of whether something approximating a process of censorship occurred in both conflicts. According to Rai (2002: 189), in 2002 during the build-up to invasion:

Crucial pieces of information, with great bearing on the major decisions being made by Government, appeared in the British broadsheets – fleetingly. The information was effectively suppressed, almost as if a Government censor had indicated the boundaries of the acceptable and journalists had halted at this border. There is no such Government censor. There is, however, a real problem of freedom of expression and of freedom

of thought in Britain and in the United States, two of the freest societies ever to have existed.

Accusations of ‘censorship’, like those of ‘propaganda’ are clearly aimed at undermining the legitimacy of specific practices – in this case the exclusion rather than inclusion of particular information. Rai does not assert that a formal process of government censorship was at work, but implies that informal but nevertheless clear boundaries of acceptability were operating to influence the information in circulation.

Similarly, invoking the relevance of the previous conflict, Rampton and Stauber (2003: 185) claim that during Operation Desert Storm: ‘Overt censorship played a relatively minor role in shaping the content of reports from the field. Far more important was the way embedding encouraged reporters to identify with the soldiers they were covering.’

The importance attributed to this ‘embedding’ in coverage of the subsequent conflict both in academic commentaries and public discourse is difficult to overstate – most sources view it as a key development in war coverage, making the embedded journalist reliant upon and sympathetic towards the military – indeed directly dependent upon them for their safety (Simpson, 2003: 350).

This leads to the suspicion that the relationship of embedding has been expanded deliberately because of this. As Lewis *et al.* (2004: 11) put it: ‘public relations strategies in the Pentagon are partly based on the recognition that influencing coverage involves controlling the context in which journalists report, rather than more direct forms of interference.’ In some ways, embedding is therefore viewed as a means to ‘manage’ the media without overt interference being necessary.

The embeddedness of journalists also has an epistemological relevance, changing our relationship to ‘reality’, such that the coverage it produces seems more immediate, and more ‘real’:

Embeddedness [...] constitutes a language that signifies the real [...] It offers a form of indexical compensation [...] The reality of representation is substituted for the representation of reality. That is, 'authenticity' arises less from the authenticity of reality per se than the authenticity of the means by which reality is portrayed.

(Crandall, 2003: no pagination).

In their account, based upon the analysis of 1534 television news reports from the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News, a survey based on a representative sample of 1002 people within Britain and interviews with 37 'key' actors in broadcast coverage, Lewis *et al.* (2004) noted the expansion of the coverage drawn from embedded reporters, including the way they supplanted reporters based in military briefing centres as the major source of news, as well as the implications of this to questions of partiality:

The MoD [...] felt that they were aware of the identifiable pro- or anti-war stances of various journalists throughout. The US media, on the other hand, seem to have been enlisted much earlier and more thoroughly to the 'patriotic mission' of embedding.

(Lewis *et al.*, 2004: 21).

This is particularly interesting, given the importance attributed to patriotism. This was an important theme noted in accounts of the preceding Gulf War, both in terms of the justifications made (Billig, 1995), and particularly in terms of how a process of scrutiny and surveillance, operated upon the coverage of war: 'Many politicians and organizations scrutinized the media for possible traces of defeatism, breaches of security, or "understanding of the enemy"' (Luostarinen, 1992: 133). In 1991, the UK's Jeremy Bowen, and the US's Peter Arnett suffered from such inspection and were portrayed as propagandists for Hussein and as traitors to their respective countries (Aburish, 2001: 306; Norris, 1991: 271; Hackett, 1993:6).

An explanation for such filtration processes, which does not require the existence of an active conspiracy, concerns the role of



national cultural templates. Hackett (1993: 10) focuses upon American local press coverage of events in the First Gulf War, showing how dissent was marginalised as the product of 'fringe people'. He claims the hostility to dissent prevalent in the media suggests that: 'the peace movement was running against a cultural template by which Americans interpret the experience of war' (Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 533). This American 'master narrative' of war, is as follows:

The story begins with a villain who gratuitously, indefensibly and without provocation attacks an innocent victim, thereby challenging the moral order of which the US is the Center. The US is reluctant to resort to war, and tries to persuade the transgressor to be nice, to return to the paths of righteousness. But the villain may be inherently evil and monstrous, so that the use of reason is out of the question. Then the US may be compelled to take on the role of hero, and swoop down and destroy the enemy, skilfully and surgically employing the technological superiority of American weapons, and then go home again. Unlike lesser countries, the American motive in going to war is not self-aggrandizement or revenge, as it might be in a conflict between equals; rather the motive is punishment of evil, meted out from above, just as God may punish sinners, and parents, their children. So motivated, the American people overcome their initial reluctance to go to war, and unite to support the action, even at the cost of making sacrifices and undergoing difficulties, because it is just and moral to do so. In that struggle against unmitigated evil, the only acceptable outcome is the untrammelled triumph of good, and the unconditional surrender of evil. The demon is exorcised, the moral order restored, and the troops, as instruments of that order, go home to victory parades.

(Hackett, 1993: 49-50).

The resonance of this account with the events subsequent to 9-11, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the rhetoric of the WoT goes some way to supporting its validity. Specifically, in the case of the first Gulf War, the template was alleged to filter coverage in a variety of ways:

Assuming that news coverage of the Gulf confrontation was indeed scripted according to the master narrative, what patterns of emphasis and

exclusion would we expect? We would expect coverage to emphasize US efforts during the crisis to find a peaceful solution without allowing evil to be rewarded; evidence of Iraqi aggression, atrocities and evil; the preparedness of US troops and the efficiency and precision of their weapons. Conversely, information contradicting the master narrative would tend to be filtered out, if not by journalists, then by their audiences, whose sense of patriotism would be outraged: previous US support for Saddam Hussein; the notions that the Bush Administration might have been 'shopping for a war', and/or had given Iraq a 'green light' to invade, and/or had snubbed Iraqi overtures to settle the crisis peacefully; the tarnished human rights record of the victim, Kuwait, and especially of some US allies (Syria, Turkey) in the crusade against Iraq; the possibility that Kuwait was not a blameless victim, that Iraq had plausible historical claims and economic grievances; US violations of international law, as alleged by Ramsay Clark's war crimes tribunal; the imprecision of many US weapons, only a minority of which were 'smart'; Iraqi civilian casualties; US motives for intervention in the Middle East apart from reversing aggression.

(Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 536-7).

The implication of accepting this analysis is that the explanation of the exclusions and inclusions involved in the processes of criticism and justification requires an appreciation of culturally embedded narratives rather than crude assertions of dominance.

Hackett (1993: 41) points to the difficulties that the template caused for dissenters, requiring them to spend: 'much of their access [to the media] simply defending their own legitimacy, asserting their patriotism, their social normality, their right to speak' (Hackett, 1993: 41), i.e., making 'defensive claims to legitimacy' rather than directly stating their case against war.

Whilst emerging from a very different theoretical and methodological location, there are parallels here with Smith's (1991) Durkheimian cultural understanding of the Falklands war – not least in the implicit understanding of the workings of something approximating a sacred/profane distinction.

According to Smith, the Falklands war was 'caused' by a series of cultural differentiations between Britain and Argentina on the

sacred/profane distinction. In Britain, sacred values such as the morality, democracy, freedom and rationality of Britain were asserted and contrasted with the profanity of Argentina – its alleged immorality, dictatorship, lack of freedom and irrationality (Smith, 1991: 117) in such a way as to justify war and enabling it to regenerate British collective moral sentiments. In relation to war more generally, Smith claims that:

[T]he maintenance of the cultural motivations for war, as with any successful ritual, crucially depends upon the work of practitioners in maintaining a sacred: profane code. They must do two things for a war to become a ritual. Firstly, a cultural code embodying the sacred:profane distinction must be at the center of discourse. Secondly, ‘war’ events must be accounted for as acceptable products of the code. In the first step the choice of code is accountable to events, and in the second, events are accountable to the codes produced by the coding. If the sacred:profane code is shown to be the incorrect yardstick for evaluating events, or if events are held to contradict the code, the generative force of the sacred:profane distinction is lost, and the ritual motivations for fighting will evaporate (though of course instrumental motivations may remain). In consequence, much of the *parole* in the war can be seen, speaking ethnomethodologically, as accounting activity aimed at maintaining (or destroying) the ritual status.

(Smith, 1991: 108; original emphasis).

Smith’s Durkheimian cultural approach was explicitly designed as a corrective to more common economic and geo-political explanations for war, and it may be interesting to consider the types of coding necessary to facilitate the coalitions’ invasion of Iraq. Whether or not we can accept that particular coding ‘causes’ war directly is a slightly different matter.

### **3.4.2. Circulating Truth, Lies or Propaganda?**

The other major area in which the role of the media has undergone scrutiny is the truth status of the stories it circulated.

I have already mentioned accusations about ‘propaganda’ in the context of the ‘war on terrorism’ (Chomsky, 2001: 16), and the propaganda angle, focussing on the media’s role in ‘manufacturing’ a context for particular action to take place, has been prominent in contributions from strong critics of the wars, unsurprisingly given its negative (profane) implications (Smith, 1991: 130).

Particularly in relation to the first conflict, another set of interconnected, but distinct, notions with a rather more ‘postmodern’ twist were promulgated, i.e., that it was not the truth or reality of the events themselves that were at stake, but something rather different – not simply that an illegitimate ‘bias’, which implies that a more ‘objective’ account is possible (Anderson, 2003: paragraph 1.14) – was at work.

According to his consistently pessimistic perspective, Virilio (2002: 22) claims that the first Gulf war shows us that it is:

useless to investigate what still distinguishes ‘news’ from ‘propaganda’; the question is already no longer current, active – interactive – disinformation never being a lie, but the excess of contradictory news, hypernews [...]

Everything is true in the offensive of direct broadcasting, ‘true’ in the instrumental sense of the term, that is to say, operationally and immediately efficacious.

As an alternative, Virilio (2002: 67) posits the importance, instead, of ‘*disinformation by excess information* [...], jamming, a saturation of meaning’ (original emphasis), therefore echoing Baudrillard’s (1995: 76) claims that the: ‘threshold of mental tolerance for information’ was deliberately crossed.

Notwithstanding the extremely vicious criticisms of Baudrillard’s account of the non-existence of Gulf War One as an ‘unjust non war’ (Merrin, 1994: 451) because of its alleged complicity with the loss of moral nerve which reduced the success of anti-war conviction (Norris, 1992: 27), anyone attempting to keep up with the news coverage of the more recent conflict, would have to admit that by

any standards the threshold of mental tolerance was certainly exceeded. There was an excess of information about the event, making clarity intensely problematic to achieve.

### ***3.5. Representations of Saddam Hussein***

Although the personalisation of events involving Iraq has often been criticised (Aburish, 2001: 305; Ritter in Rivers Pitt, 2002: 67), a key component in both conflicts was the representation of Saddam Hussein, particularly in the Western media.

It is argued that an important part of the justification of the Gulf War in 1991 was a process of media ‘demonization’ (Corcoran, 1992: 108; Kellner, 1995: 207) which involved circulation of the idea that no negotiation and therefore no diplomatic solution to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was possible. This is supported by Aburish (2001: 295), in his biography of Hussein: ‘everything was aimed at creating the image of a monster with whom one could not negotiate.’ By the end of that war, Hussein had ‘ceased to be a person and had become an institutionalized monstrosity’ (Aburish, 2001: 315).

There are, of course, many who would see such a situation as entirely appropriate. However, what is perhaps most interesting about this situation from my point of view, is that this was also observed as a ‘change’ – if he had to undergo demonization, then he was not considered sufficiently demonic before, so discursive work was required.

According to Chomsky (2001: 65) the treatment afforded Saddam Hussein illustrates the way in which people are ‘transferred from favored friends and allies to the category of “terrorists” because they disobeyed U.S. orders’. Chomsky’s treatment is a little trite, but successfully identifies the sense in which the movement from friend to enemy, across the distinction that constitutes the ‘political’ (Schmitt, 1996; Mouffe, 1993) is something that occurs regularly within US foreign policy.

In a more subtle analysis, looking at political cartoons and caricatures of ‘the enemy’, Link (1991a) notes how this transformation undergone by Saddam Hussein was initially rather problematic for those covering it. Because of Iraq’s secularism, and the previous favour afforded Hussein in the West: ‘in the first period after Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait the press suffered from something like an “enemy image” crisis: no immediately identifiable Saddam stereotypes existed’ (Link, 1991a: 46). There was a dearth of ready-made negative representations of Hussein, so work was required to construct one. According to Link the usual ‘irrational madman’ or ‘lunatic’ form of portrayal often favoured by the West (with which it can contrast its reason and soberness) could not be sustained because of the very slow escalation of events:

when a situation escalates more slowly it is more difficult to sustain the image of an ‘enemy’ lacking subject status. After a while it could not be denied that Saddam Hussein maneuvered (for example, with the hostages) or ‘played poker’. The moment such gambler symbols appeared on the scene, the enemy had been conceded subject status.

(Link, 1991a: 48).

Engaging in manoeuvring, and playing poker are considered the actions of a calculating and rational actor not a madman, so any such representations could not be easily sustained. Link’s narrative captures some of the complexities of the way Saddam Hussein’s character has been represented – the co-presence of accusations of irrational madness and shrewd calculation – which were also present in the more recent justificatory process.

Many contributions about the representation of Saddam Hussein involved attempts at policing the way that he has been understood. One such contribution comes from psychologist Jerrold Post who rose to prominence throughout the build-up to war as an ‘expert’ who had studied the psychology of Saddam Hussein, and other political leaders.

Post (2003: 340-4) made a series of claims about Saddam Hussein's psychology, describing aspects of his personality such as his 'revolutionary pragmatism and ideological flexibility', his alleged paranoia, his 'messianic ambition' and his 'malignant narcissism'. None of this sounds very healthy, but Post is acutely concerned to dismiss claims that Hussein was suffering from a psychotic disorder, claiming that there was 'no evidence' for such an accusation (Post, 2003: 342). In fact, he stresses that such 'pejorative diagnosis is not only inaccurate but also dangerous. Consigning Saddam to the realm of madness can mislead decision makers into believing he is unpredictable when in fact he is not' (Post, 2003: 335). Furthermore, he suggests that there was a potential self-fulfilling prophecy in the 'coalition's' approach such that the political calculator would be replaced by a much less rational actor because of their actions:

when Saddam is backed into a corner, his customary prudence and judgment are apt to falter [...] The persistent calls for regime change may well be moving him into that dangerous 'back against the wall' posture [...] Moreover, with his back to the wall it is probable that he would attempt to use chemical/biological weapons against Israel and against U.S. armed forces in the region.

(Post, 2003: 365).

Thankfully this last piece of the prediction did not come to pass, but the central implication of this is that the coalition's actions were self-defeating if their aim was to produce a diplomatic (i.e. non-military) solution to the developing conflict, since they were likely to render Hussein much less rational.

From my point of view, in the more recent conflict, leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the most interesting thing is the consequentiality of those representations for those against a military 'solution'. How is the badness of Saddam Hussein mobilised to make the lives of those against war more 'difficult'?

### ***3.6. The Importance of Various Histories***

#### **3.6.1. Saddam Hussein's History with the West**

An important component in the representation of Saddam Hussein and his enemy status is his history of having a close relationship with the West. In particular this has been a theme identified by critics of the action in 2003 – characterising the US government's portrayal of him as hypocritical (Sardar and Davies, 2004: 242). For example, Rampton and Stauber (2003: 21) accuse the US press and politicians in particular of having displayed 'astonishing historical amnesia' about the US's relationship with Iraq throughout the 1980s, claiming that:

back when Saddam actually started gassing people, his government was considered 'legitimate', and Iran's attempt to achieve what the current Bush administration has called 'regime change' was 'inconsistent with the accepted norms of behaviour', according to the US State department.

Aburish (2001: 354) also condemns the US and UK governments for their attempts to ignore their complicity in Saddam Hussein's crimes. In particular he derides the fact that the use of chemical weapons in Halabja, which had been ignored by the US administration, was subsequently turned into the 'rallying cry' that Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons 'against his own people' (Aburish, 2001: 295) – a phrase which was commonly invoked in describing his 'badness' throughout the more recent controversy.

The history of some of the personnel involved in making the case for war was also noted by some of those in favour of military action. For example, in his biography of Saddam Hussein, Coughlin (2002: 213-4) notes the irony of Donald Rumsfeld's role in the build-up to war given his key part in the Reagan administration's decision to bring Iraq out of diplomatic isolation in the early 1980s (also see Kampfner, 2004: 229). Such previous closeness, cynical or otherwise, brought about the necessity of the discursive work required to confer upon Saddam Hussein a satisfactory 'enemy image' which could help



justify military action in 1991 (Link, 1991; Schulte-Sasse and Schulte-Sasse, 1991: 90).

Throughout the literature on both conflicts, there is a widespread consensus identifying a specific historical theme as key in representations of Saddam Hussein – the drawing of historical analogies between him and Adolf Hitler.

### **3.6.2. Saddam Hussein as ‘Another Hitler’**

Within accounts of the character and methods of Saddam Hussein there is often considerable time spent describing similarities with other dictators, particularly those associated with the Second World War.

Connections between Hussein and Stalin are common, with Iraq under Hussein often described as a ‘vicious neo-Stalinist tyranny’ (Record and Terrill, 2004: 41), even by those opposing his violent overthrow. Hussein is often referred to as idolising (Shawcross, 2004: 19), or being influenced by Stalin (Simpson, 2003: 367-8; Coughlin, 2002: 47; Darwish and Alexander, 1991: 216), and as possessing an impressive library of Stalin’s writings (Aburish, 2001: 13, 79).

Much more prominent has been the question of a link between Hussein and Adolf Hitler, an accusation regularly advanced in 1990-91 by George Bush Senior (Freedman and Karsh, 1994: 219). It is possible to consider contributions mentioning a Saddam-as-Hitler logic as falling into two groups – those claiming a connection, and those claiming that others claim a connection. Very often, it is unclear into which group a contribution falls, but there is an important difference between saying ‘Saddam Hussein is another Hitler’ and saying that ‘many people have claimed that “Saddam Hussein is another Hitler”.’

Most scholarship that observes the connection made with Hitler broadly fall into the second group, describing the significance of the accusations rather than making them themselves, and some accounts of various aspects of Iraq’s recent role in the world mention the Saddam-as-Hitler logic in passing (Przybyłowicz and JanMohamed, 1991: 11; Kellner, 1992: 63; Said, 1993: 357; Shlaim, 1995: 96;

Walsh, 1995: 13; Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, 2003: 48), whereas others explore its significance in more detail.

Aburish (2001: 288) claims that this logic partly comes from a British attitude which became a 'national trademark since the failure to appease Hitler in the 1930s'. Aburish agrees with Ali (2002: 143) that the analogy with Hitler arose subsequent to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, but Ali takes a more intense critical stance, trying to undermine the connection by claiming that: 'Ever since the Second World War the name of Hitler and his philosophy has been recklessly invoked to drum up public support for Western wars' (Ali, 2002: 284). According to this, the use of Hitler analogies is something of which we should automatically be suspicious.

A different form of problematisation is used by Virilio (2002: 19; original emphasis) who claimed that: "*Saddam Hussein is Hitler*" seems to me weak, even optimistic, as the risks associated with the Middle East in 1990 are ultimately incomparable with those of Europe in the 1940s.' At the time of the first Gulf War, Virilio implies that the Middle East was actually more dangerous than Europe in the 1940s – a statement which now arguably sounds rather prophetic.

Link (1991b) also attempts to understand such historical analogies more generally, via the use of the Saddam=Hitler formula:

In principle one can distinguish two types of historical analogies. One kind of analogy is based on structural and functional factors, as in comparison of different countries according to their level of industrialization. Though this kind of comparison can yield valuable insights, it is always complex and requires the collection of voluminous data. Rarely, if ever, are structural analogies, such as those between Hitler's expansionary empire and today's Iraq, discussed in the media. If they were, the shortcomings of the Hitler-Saddam analogy would quickly become apparent: Hitler's great German empire was not a nation at the threshold of modernity; Hitler did not have to buy his poison gas for Auschwitz in foreign countries, etc. The second type of analogy, favored by the media, depends instead on parallels in patterns of interaction, on 'characters' and collective symbols. While the power of Saddam's Iraq fails in a structural comparison with Hitler's imperial German empire, one

can apply the interactional pattern of a police-man toward a criminal to both Hitler and Saddam.

(Link, 1991b: 61).

In the relevant empirical chapter I will examine some contributions attempting to utilise or defeat the analogy by comparing the two contexts, but what is most interesting about Link's understanding is that in stressing the interactional pattern of policing associated with the analogy he appreciates that its moral force and consequentiality are not necessarily directly entwined with its 'truth' status. He also identifies the significance of the way that the analogy, as a definition of the situation, fosters a preference, for a particular type of activity – has a specific teleology associated with it.

### **3.6.3. Another Vietnam?**

Connections have often been made between Iraq and the Vietnam War (1961-75) by those campaigning against military action, in particular in America where it has especially powerful cultural resonances.

The consequences of that period of American history are reflected in the prominence given to the Vietnam War within US cultural and social memory (Misztal, 2003b: 11; Simons, 1998: 8), and the extent to which it caused a 'national identity crisis' (Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 535) and has served as a 'constraint that has counselled caution' (Roper, 1995: 40) since. Indeed, this crisis spawned what is known as 'Vietnam syndrome' (Kellner, 1992: 385-6; Merrin, 1994: 453; Freedman and Karsh, 1994: 441; Rampton and Stauber, 2003: 182). This 'scar' on the collective mind of America fostered a constant need to 'exorcise' the war's ghost (Mariscal, 1991: 97; Said, 1992: 393; Walsh, 1995: 1; Massumi, 1998: 49; Simons, 1998: 21, 333), contributing the purchase of Reagan's 'back again' rhetoric during his time as President (Baudrillard, 1989: 108). During 1991 this 'exorcism' took the form of the constant denial of similarities between the wars:

The denial of any similarity between the wars, however, became more than a rhetorical move by public figures – it transfixed the U.S. popular imagination and became an indispensable element in many representations of the Persian Gulf War.

(Kendrick, 1994: 130-1).

From a critical perspective, Rowe (1991: 137) claims that despite the presence of such rhetoric of denial, there were important reasons to explore the historical parallels between the wars. Of course, most important is the extent to which so doing mobilises the very negative associations of Vietnam, something advantageous to those strongly against the war.

In 2003, the Vietnam analogy was mobilised in public discourse and literature increasingly following the cessation of the main hostilities, where the resultant situation was described by Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry (2003: 112) as ‘an increasingly Vietnam-like scenario’. They stressed the important connotations of a particular key word in relation to the Vietnam analogy, the word in question being ‘the dreaded Q-word “quagmire”’ (Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, 2003: 128, 163; also see Rowe, 1991: 121).

The prominence of the Vietnam analogy moved Record and Terrill (2004) to engage in a detailed scholarly comparison of two contexts. Some of their assertions will make an appearance in a relevant empirical chapter, but their general conclusion is summed up as follows:

The differences between Iraq and Vietnam outnumber the similarities, especially the strategic and military dimensions, but two aspects of the political context may contain pertinent lessons or warnings – attempting to build a state in an alien culture, and sustaining domestic political support in a protracted war against an irregular enemy.

(Record and Terrill, 2004: *vii*, 3, 55).

Some of those explicitly against the conflict also focussed on differences between the two contexts, for example:

The siege of Iraq is not another war in Vietnam. Its target, scale and means are all lesser. But there is another difference too. This time, Britain is not just lending diplomatic and ideological support to American barbarities, it is actively participating in them as a military confederate. The record of Old Labour, shameful as it was, is little beside the odium of its successor.

(Ali, 2002: 153).

Here the differences (as well as some similarities) are mobilised to portray the Iraq conflict as ‘worse’ than Vietnam in the sense that, this time British involvement would be more active and therefore more ‘odious’.

### ***3.7. Anti-Americanism***

As the only remaining ‘superpower’ America’s place in the world is highly significant and a person, organisation or state’s relationship to America can be highly consequential in various ways, and this was an important theme running through the debates over Iraq, both within the literature and within the discourse internal to the context. This is particularly the case when it comes to the accusation of something called ‘anti-Americanism’ as a motivation for a position against war.

In his work on ‘banal nationalism’ – the ordinariness of the influence of the nation – Billig (1995: 153) points out that, in American professional wrestling, ‘Americanness’ is a ‘semantic sign of goodness itself’. The positive value attributed to ‘America’ as an idea is not restricted to the wrestling ring, and of course, this is not entirely an accident. Some dimensions of the positivity of ‘Americanism’ are the product of fairly deliberate state intervention throughout the period 1914-24 – the ‘Americanization campaign’ (Ricento, 2003). Ricento points out a variety of discursive strategies and techniques pursued during this campaign, including ‘Constructive strategies’ (including justification, unification and avoidance of differences); ‘Strategies of transformation’; and ‘Strategies of perpetuation’ (including strategies of avoidance of change) (Ricento,

2003: 617) all of which were aimed at constructed a unified vision of what it was to be American, associated with which was a specific narrative of national identity (Ricento, 2003: 631).

In his account of the impact of Vietnam upon American culture, Martin (1993: 27) discusses Andrew Ross's writing on the Cold War, including the that way that an official distinction between inside and outside was established via the 'American/un-American' distinction, through the anti-Communist 'purges' of the McCarthyite era (Hofstadter, 1996). Particular activities were allocated to each side of the distinction delimiting legitimate variations from appropriately American behaviour.

According to Crockatt (2003) the 'quasi-theological' notion of the 'un-American' is closely associated with that of anti-Americanism:

To be un-American is to deviate from some accepted notion of Americanism; it is a form of heresy. There is a close relationship between un-Americanism and anti-Americanism, the distinction between them being that the former is generally applied to Americans while the latter generally, though not exclusively, refers to non-Americans. What ties them is the peculiarly intense expression of nationalism known as *Americanism*.

(Crockatt, 2003: 50).

Contributions discussing anti-Americanism vary somewhat in the meanings attributed to the term, and particularly with regard to the inclusiveness of their definitions. Some contributions reserve it for a rather restricted scope, limiting its application to those who profess a desire to destroy America and have no qualms about murdering its citizens (i.e., 'al Qaeda'). Others utilise a less restricted definition including many or all expressions of criticism of America's culture, its government and policies.

From a firmly anti-war position, consistent with his position on the previous conflict (see Kellner, 1992; 1995), Kellner (2004: 147) acknowledges that 'anti-Americanism is on the rise throughout the world.' His definition refers to extremely negative manifestations of

attitudes towards America, claiming that these are often exacerbated by George W. Bush himself. In contrast, Shawcross (2004: 181) writes of a dangerous and yet, according to him, familiar ‘hate-America-first view of the world’ (also see Kirkpatrick, 1984: 23). He associates this with ‘the Left’, but also claims that it is contagious and ‘seeping into the population at large’ (Shawcross, 2004: 91).

From a position critical of the invasion, Rampton and Stauber (2003: 198) locate the apparent expansion of anti-Americanism in its alleged success as a ‘formula to win ratings’ in the Muslim and Arab world. Moreover, they view it as an equivalent (‘equal and opposite’) strategy to the ‘hyper-patriotism’ used within America. In identifying the primary location of anti-Americanism as the ‘Muslim and Arab world’, they utilise a relatively exclusive definition and engage in a process of distancing – denying its application to Western critics such as themselves. It is important to understand that, as critics of the invasion, and U.S. foreign policy more generally, they are the type of people often accused of being in thrall to anti-Americanism.

In his thoughtful contribution, Crockatt (2003) discusses the way in which the *London Review of Books* became a site of controversy after 9-11 by publishing material interpreted as saying that America ‘deserved it’, and asks whether or not there is ‘some sort of elective affinity between liberal intellectuals and anti-Americanism?’ (Crockatt, 2003: 41). In discussing the association, he mentions the ‘condescension’ and attitudes of superiority often presumed to underlie anti-Americanism (Crockatt, 2003: 42), something of which Marshland (1985: 24) accuses sociologists more generally as part of their allegedly generalised and systematic ‘reflex anti-Americanism’! Furthermore, Marshland’s contribution demonstrates that, just as aspects of ‘Americanism’ have a history, so does the use of the term anti-Americanism. It would be absurdly ignorant to view it as a new weapon in the available political armoury – it was articulated throughout the Cold war, and directed in particular at members of CND and left-wing critics of American foreign policy (including sociologists).

Hebdige (1988: 52-8) notes that some degree of antipathy to aspects of America and the spread of its influence have united across time such diverse people as Matthew Arnold, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell and Richard Hoggart. More recent accounts from American critics popular in the UK have noted the history of articulation and application of 'anti-Americanism' has not been historically confined to one political perspective. According to Eric Schlosser:

It used to be that we would take shit from grumpy old Tories who hated rock music and viewed Americans as being just slightly above Australians on the social evolutionary scale. There was also no shortage of leftwing Laborites who saw Americans as a personal embodiment of racism and neo-colonialism and mindless consumerism.

(*The Guardian: G2*, 29/10/03: 5).

As part of her *Friedenspreis* acceptance speech at the 2003 Frankfurt book fair, Susan Sontag also discussed the relationship between Europe and the US:

It should also be remembered that, historically, the most virulent anti-American rhetoric ever heard in Europe – consisting essentially in the charge that Americans are barbarians – came not from the so-called left but from the extreme Right.

(*The Guardian: Saturday Review*, 18/10/03: 4-6).

In the context of the cold war, Haseler (1986) distinguished four types of anti-Americanism – primitive, functional, communist, and ideological, and in their more recent account Sardar and Davies (2002: 195-203) discuss four main sets of reasons for people's objections to the USA – existential, cosmological, ontological and definitional ones. Hostility to America stems from the fact that economically and otherwise, America has made it too difficult for others to exist, it has acquired a god-like role as the 'prime cause' of most things in the world, it possesses a circular ontological logic about its own goodness



(reflected in the American/un-American distinction), and has become the singularly most successful defining power in the world.

Personally I am highly suspicious of the term's analytical utility as referring to specific 'objects', both due to its vagueness, and the strategies governing its articulation. As Christopher Hitchens, himself strongly in favour of the invasion of Iraq, points out: 'In most obvious ways, the term "anti-American" is as meaningless or absurd as the accusation "un-American" used to be. It is both too precise and at the same time too vague' (Hitchens, 2003: 29).

It is a moot point whether or not complete precision is ever possible, but suspicion about the vagueness seems a more appropriate response than embracing it in the way that Crockatt does. He is comfortable with a breadth of application that views anti-Americanism as something that assumes: 'many forms and has many different roots. It is more useful to think of it as a family of related attitudes rather than as a single entity' (Crockatt, 2003: 44). Nevertheless, he acknowledges that it is:

a contested concept whose range of reference is wide and shifting. Though at the extreme there may be little ambiguity about what constitutes anti-Americanism, in the muddier middle ground, its meaning is a matter of perception and point of view. On occasions, the term is used as a political weapon to discredit an opponent rather than anything approaching a neutral term of analysis.

(Crockatt, 2003: 46; also see Haseler, 1986: 57).

When utilised as a weapon it implies 'an element of irrationalism and resistance to facts that may run counter to prejudices' (Crockatt, 2003: 43), and is therefore interdiscursively connected to other '-isms'.

I have continually invoked Crockatt's analysis, because of both its subtlety and its descriptive strengths, but there is a clear tension between his acknowledgment of the political and strategic uses made of it as an accusation, and his apparent acceptance of an extremely broad definition. The combination of strategic use with breadth of definition raises the question of whether it would be better to attend to

the operation of the notion of anti-Americanism, where and when it is utilised, rather than accept its *a priori* validity.

### 3.8. *Supporting the Troops*

The circulation of the idea of anti-Americanism relies to some degree on the 'nation' as something one can be for or against. Another dimension of the literature involving some similar issues is the observed importance attributed to 'supporting the troops' – being clearly 'for' them.

The pressure – an incitement – to express support for the troops is observed within a variety of approaches. For example, Smith (1991: 129) notes Margaret Thatcher's claims during the Falklands War that the BBC and the media had a duty to: 'support "our boys"'.

Some contributions assert the existence of a generalised reflexive tendency for the media to support military action, losing their critical faculties: 'When the guns are firing, even if in only one direction, the media close ranks and become a cheering section for the home team' (Chomsky, 1992: 54; Freeman, 2004: 65), with media coverage of war, and its regular references to 'our boys', and their 'angelic sacrifice' (Massumi, 1998: 42) assisting the promotion and justification of war (Richardson, 2004: 155; also see Kellner, 1992: 235-6).

It is not only the media who are subject to pressures regarding the need to support the troops. In the 'first' Gulf War, according to Hackett and Zhao (1994: 528-9; also see Hackett, 1993: 46) the pressure manifested itself in anti-war protesters seeking legitimacy for their dissent by defensively stressing their patriotism and being forced to spend their access to the media claiming that despite being against the war, they supported the troops. The strategy was not always successful, since, as Rowe (1991: 127, original emphasis) puts it: 'The elementary distinction between "support" for human beings and "opposition" to combat activities was considered too intellectual in a time when only emotion made *sense*'.

Beck (2002: 45) notes the fact that critics of the policies pursued in the WoT have been 'chided as unpatriotic', and in relation to the war in 2003, specifically, Anderson (2003: paragraph 1.21) notes how according to opinion polls public support for the war significantly increased with its outbreak, claiming that this was due to people rallying around the troops. According to Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, (2003: 83), in the US, once the war was 'over' and the occupation underway: 'The media and the Democrats were still too nervous to question the purpose of our being in Iraq, lest they be shamed for "not supporting our troops."' Such pressures led some to coin rather reductive phrases such as 'Patriotism Police' (Rampton and Stauber, 2003: 166) or 'Pentagon Correctness' (Solomon, 2004: 162) to make sense of such processes.

In his exploration of the 'banal' manifestations of nationalism, Billig (1995: 2) claims that the first Gulf War: 'indicates the speed with which Western publics can be mobilized for flag-waving warfare in the name of nationhood', as well as demonstrating how nations portrayed as opposing 'us' can undergo transformation into 'enemies of international morality' (Billig, 1995: 92). Billig (1995: 105-9) also describes the significance of 'national deixis' – the rhetorical pointing involved in talking about 'us' and 'them' in national terms. This process is clearly of interest in relation to references to 'our' troops. If they are 'our' boys, belonging to 'us', then the 'we' that is envisioned is a national 'we', with the 'nation' conceived in familial terms.

In their account, Rampton and Stauber quote Hermann Goering's testimony at the Nuremberg trials in 1946 as advocating use of a similar logic:

the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are under being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.

(Rampton and Stauber, 2003: 137; also see Žižek, 2003: 1).

Invoking a logic utilised by Nazis – associating the actions of the US administration with those of Nazi Germany – is clearly part of their wider strategy of delegitimizing the invasion, but is particularly insightful in relation to its diagnosis of the significance of establishing a sense of national unity. Indeed, using similar logic, Richard Sennett has questioned the extent to which a form of ‘soft fascism’ requiring liberals to prove their patriotism, might be at work in America (*The Guardian: Saturday Review*, 23/10/04: 34-5).

As I have already mentioned, Smith (1991: 113) uses a Durkheimian cultural approach to explore war as a ritual – a ‘festival of rationality’ – through which societies recharge their moral sentiments. In partial contrast, and in the context of the first Gulf War, other accounts view the sense of national (as distinct from societal) unity as a process of aestheticization:

a society that uses representations of war as a means of unifying the body politic in an imaginary fashion needs an elaborate network of signs representing Oneness and Otherness – including a sophisticated economy distributing these signs and institutionalized practices that guarantee a rapturous public consumption of such signs.

(Schulte-Sasse and Schulte-Sasse, 1991: 72).

They claim that processes associated with such unity generation are fundamentally not rational or argumentative, but about desire.

Regardless of the logic from which it emanates, the importance of the incitement of national unity and support of the troops are important phenomena requiring detailed consideration. Without direct consideration of the public debates, its relevance in 2003 is strongly implied by *Time Magazine*’s (29/12/03-5/1/04) decision to make the US soldier its ‘Person of the Year’.

### ***3.9. The Marginalisation of Protest***

#### **3.9.1. Marginalisation**

As I have already intimated, it seems that in relation to the WoT a degree of hostility impinges upon those who may wish to advance

particular arguments, and accounts of anti-war protest identify various processes through which it is marginalised, making protest an unattractive option, and limiting its successes, as well as contributing to a formal appearance of 'unity on the homefront' (Kendrick, 1994: 143). As Hackett (1993: 24) puts it:

One line of attack emphasized a nationalistic version of responsibility: protesters should take more care not to comfort the enemy or undermine the morale of US troops in the Gulf by showing a country divided. Another argument sought to place protesters on the moral defensive (and at the same time endorse American militarism) by arguing that their freedom to protest was being preserved by the very people and actions they were protesting against.

When protest was not passed over completely (Massumi, 1998: 43), such marginalisation involves dismissive references to 'professional agitators' (Hackett, 1993: 30), or the coding of protest as conducted by an irrational 'unruly mob' in which their arguments are ignored and only their loud sloganeering given prominence (Kellner, 1992: 79; Kellner, 1995: 209), both reliant upon a 'journalistic paradigm for social protests' which 'gravitates toward individuals exhibiting the most extreme appearance and behaviours' (McLeod and Hertog, 1992: 260).

Hackett (1993) focussed upon grassroots protest rather than elite discourse, examining US local news coverage, to identify three frames in the media coverage of anti-war protest: the 'enemy within' – portraying protesters as a hostile internal threat – the 'marginal oddity' – minimising their significance by focussing upon their quantitative and qualitative deviance – and the 'legitimate controversy' – recognising that opposition to war could be legitimate. He argues that in local press coverage of anti-war protests, the pervasiveness of the enemy within frame required that:

even writers who did not accept it felt compelled to address it through appropriate qualifications, disavowals and distinctions. Some editorials

distinguished between legitimate and illegitimate protest, between 'rowdies' or vandals, and enlightened objectors who are 'honestly motivated.'

(Hackett, 1993: 24).

The prevalence of such disavowals resulted in the formation and articulation of a 'hierarchy of dissent' – an idea echoing Becker's (1970: 207) 'hierarchy of credibility' – in which some forms were privileged by the antiwar movement and the media (Hackett, 1993: 39; also see Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 525). For strategic and normative reasons concessions were made to the hostile discursive climate.

Many of those producing accounts against the more recent invasion exhibit awareness of similar hostility, and deploy similar discursive techniques to combat them. In particular, they have questioned the 'extreme' portrayals of anti-war protest and accusation of their 'professional' agitation by stressing the breadth and diversity of opposition to war

For example, the leaders of the Stop the War Coalition described their movement as including 'the widest possible cross-section of organisations and individuals' (German and Murray, 2003: 4; also see Rai, 2002: *xiii-xvi* and Yaqoob, 2003: 25). In his account, Cook (2003: 298) noted the breadth and 'ordinariness' of most of the people he saw taking part in the large protest marches in London (15/2/03):

I recognised many of them as the kind of people who would have marched with me against cruise missiles twenty years ago – young people with bright woollen scarves and clumsy mittens to keep out the biting cold. But most of them were different. They were ordinary people in their everyday clothes, from every walk of life and every age group in Britain.

Such claims are similar to many of the arguments made more directly within the public debate in pursuit of legitimacy, possessing a de-marginalising imperative – amounting to the claim that dissent is *not*

limited to politically 'extreme' individuals: if many, very different, people are against war then they should not be easily dismissed.

### **3.9.2. Friends, Enemies and Differentiations**

Kellner (2002: 153) directly connects George W. Bush's logic of 'with us or against us' with Schmitt's (1996) work on 'the political', arguably wishing to delegitimize Bush's logic via association with a Nazi sympathiser. Dillon (2002: 75) also invokes Schmitt arguing that rather than being an existential difference the distinction is better understood in strategic terms – implying that in the WoT the distinction is mobilised producing particular strategic effects.

The issue of enmity more generally is constantly raised in relation to war, as are various binary distinctions. As Richardson puts it:

One approach during war time is to reduce options and possibilities to an 'either/or' position [...] This creates a situation in which the only people referred to or quoted in the news are arguing either for or against war – a debate which presupposes 'We' have the right to be making such decisions.

(Richardson, 2004: 155-6).

Accounts of 1991 in particular often point to the significance of binary logic noting the presence of 'dualistic structures organized around concepts of black and white, friend and foe' (Link, 1991a: 38), as well as the way in which the 'effort to give the war and the anti-war some of the complexity they deserve also runs afoul of the in-and-out, choose-your-team, quick-fix, which-side-are-you-on mentality' (Gitlin, 1992: 45). The distinction friend/enemy exerts a steering influence upon contributions to debate, allegedly impeding sufficiently complex understandings of what is at stake.

In an article exploring the way that the events of 9-11 can be used as a teaching tool, Canaan notes how she:

used the lecture on structuralism to critique Bush's oft-quoted statement shortly after September 11<sup>th</sup> that 'you are either with us or against us'. I suggested that this statement divided the world into a binary opposition in which all are located in one camp, 'ours' or the other, 'theirs'. This effectively lumped into the latter group anyone who might have any objection to any aspect of the war – and thus equated those who opposed the war to those terrorists who instigated its initiation.

(Canaan, 2002: paragraph 5.19).

As well linking Bush's enunciations to structuralism, versions of 'us' and 'them' can also be usefully explored using membership categorization analysis, especially in terms of the way that they form part of a wider 'dialogic network' with those of other world leaders such as Tony Blair, as well as Osama bin Laden (see Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil, 2004),

Nevertheless, regardless of the approach adopted, it is possible to observe problems that may result from the application of the distinction, particularly for those preferring to be understood as *neither* friend nor enemy:

On a world scale, the decision by the US administration – I say administration rather than people because one must acknowledge the bravery of those Americans who dare speak out against their government's policy – to characterize the aftermath in terms of a war between 'us' – freedom and democracy, liberal capitalism, the good guys – and 'them' terrorists, despots, evil, the bad guys – which has no place for anything in between or neutral, and in which the USA will determine who the terrorists are, has forced states everywhere to make quick calculations of gains and losses in choosing sides. The opinion of dissenters and of those who refuse such options and what underlies them, has been marginalized or ridiculed as old left or naïve, unable to come to terms with contemporary reality.

(Venn, 2002: 122-3).

Separating the US administration and the American people, is a common move in criticism of the US, but, importantly, Venn identifies the problems that can result from the attempted refusal to be



interpellated into the friend/enemy, for/against distinction – including the possibility that those refusing the choice are exiting contemporary reality. This creates difficulties for those wishing to dissent, relating to how, and where they are to locate themselves in the available discursive space.

### **3.9.3. To What Do (or Should) Protesters Object?**

The possibility that those refusing the for/against distinction are exiting reality might actually appeal to some, not least Baudrillard (1994: 63, original emphasis), who in his account of the First Gulf (non) War claimed that ‘The question is not whether one is for or against war, but whether one is for or against *the reality of war.*’ Accordingly: ‘To be for or against the war is idiotic if the question of the very probability of this war, its credibility or degree of reality has not been raised even for a moment’ (Baudrillard, 1995: 67). Virilio (2002: 4) put the need to refuse the reality of war’s representation in more moralistic terms: ‘[W]e must not only be conscientious objectors but also objectors to the objectivity of its representation. We must not believe our eyes.’ For Virilio it is not enough to object to the war, but we ‘must’ also object to the way it is represented, whereas for Baudrillard an interrogation of the credibility of its occurrence should come before any position for or against it.

As interesting as these imperatives might be, neither approach would seem likely to have widespread appeal given that those refusing the choice between being for or against war are easily portrayed as a ‘marginal oddity’ or worse. Although he has certainly found a devoted constituency, Baudrillard is commonly marginalised within sociology and cultural studies, and it is fair to say that by invoking him as much as I have I am taking him more seriously than most people would feel comfortable with. Nevertheless his contribution raises some important and interesting issues about the ways of relating to the events that took place, and the obstacles to positioning oneself in novel ways in relation to them.

The steering pressure exerted by the for/against distinction can elide what the opposing sides may have in common, something interestingly noted by Misztal, specifically their shared relationship to a 'discourse of human rights':

The same discourse of human rights was also used by supporters of the military action against the Iraqi war as they saw the war as being necessary to eliminate local and regional human rights abuses. The logic of each choice, the first between human rights and war (meaning here abuse of human rights) and the second choice between human rights (meaning here war) and tyranny (meaning here abuse of human rights) suggests that there is only one right option. To put it differently, it means there is no alternative to human rights language [...]

While politics as it is practised forces us to make either/or choices (e.g. are you for or against war?), the issue can not be reduced to 'are you in favour of human rights or not?' The self-congratulatory nature of human rights language can be criticized not only for its emptiness, defensiveness or victimology, but also for not encouraging us to face many ambiguities and difficulties of weighing claims that cannot be judged without a detailed knowledge. Our task as academics should be to show that the choice is 'not that simple', that we all can benefit from the strengthening of our negative capability [...]

(Misztal, 2003a: paragraph 1.7-1.8).

According to this, whilst supporters of, and protesters against, military action obviously differed in their orientations to war, they shared an orientation towards human rights as important – even though human rights had a different significance in each of their 'choices'. Misztal claims that in a situation where politics forces people to make either/or choices the role of the academic should be to show that the available options are 'not that simple', i.e., to advocate appreciation of a greater degree of complexity. As will become clear, many direct contributions to the public debate arguably engaged in advocating this greater complexity, but nevertheless were also bound together with their opponents in various ways.

According to his work on the Falklands crisis Smith explains this in the following way:

The proponents and opponents of the conflict, although divided at the level of *parole*, were united at the level of *langue*. It is thus entirely probable that the opponents of the war, having engaged in ritual protest and discussion around the central symbols, derived an equally deep commitment to the same moral fabric of society as the proponents!

(Smith, 1991: 127).

People speaking in opposition to one another are nevertheless bound into a relationship with their opponents – sharing things on another level than their ‘for’ or ‘against’ orientation. For Smith what is shared lies on a deeper level than their ‘for’ or ‘against’ orientation, reliant upon a shared semiotic core – a ‘sacred centre’ (Smith, 1991: 122).

Rather than assuming that this agreement occurs on a ‘deeper’ level, is it not also possible that the various binaries Smith utilises are better thought of as semi-autonomous distinctions, and therefore that opponents can be in agreement and disagreement on the basis of different distinctions – in agreement about the importance of supporting the troops, or the reality of the war’s occurrence, but in disagreement on its morality or legality? Determining the precise location of any such agreement of course requires detailed consideration of the contributions made to the public debate, and before attempting that I need to explain how I have approached such contributions.

## 4. *Methodology Chapter*

### 4.1. *Introduction*

As already noted, the methodological approach adopted here is eclectic, something which merits discussion, and makes a clear methodological exposition simultaneously more difficult, and extremely important. When you set out not implementing a set of already-existing procedures, it is important to try to be as clear as possible about what was done, and why.

In this project, the methodology has been assembled from diverse sources, blending them together in various ways, and the intellectual journey involved in such a process cannot be described simply by naming the form(s) of transport used.

In this chapter I aim to articulate how it is that the many approaches influencing mine can come together coherently: what do they have in common that speaks to me? Whilst it provides discussion of most elements expected of a methodology chapter – a map of the contours of the materials analysed, and justification thereof – this chapter will also attempt to articulate some more contingent aspects of the blending process.

It is therefore an exercise in self-positioning – clarifying and justifying the subsequent inclusion of references to disparate bodies of work, and I will be engaging in many of the practices that I observe in the context with which this research is concerned, another fact meriting discussion.

In pursuit of approaches that can help to characterise (re)constitutive processes, and also satisfactorily get to grips with issues such as constraint, I have cast my net quite widely. In the course of this particular, long-term fishing expedition I have come to appreciate the strengths and of course weaknesses of a variety of methodological approaches.

My approach blends together insights from a variety of methodologies, but does so via the insights they can provide in relation

to my wider analytical strategy. The methodologies include: critical discourse analysis, the constructionist approach to social problems, discursive rhetorical social psychology, and other more loosely defined ‘discourse analytic’ work. It should be noted, that these ‘bodies’ are rather ill-defined, existing as interdiscursive clusters of ideas, and networks of authors, rather than as hermetically sealed entities, and there is considerable overlap and cross-pollination between several of them.

References to each are included because of the role that they have played in the development of my analytic strategy. I am not attempting a synthesis of these approaches as much as making use of them, and the types of issues to which they attend – primarily social processes of constitution. Notwithstanding any mutual antagonisms, the elective affinities and tensions between them allows the generation of different types of knowledge than that obtained by utilising just one.

The rest of this chapter is structured thematically. It is divided into sections each of which relates to some important dimension of the project, either in terms of the types of ‘phenomena’ described, or in terms of the questions they raise, and problems posed. Within my discussion of each of the themes, references to the various bodies of work appear where appropriate, and I rely on a limited range of ‘key’ texts which have played an important role in the gestation of my own work. Whilst some of the contents are clearly related back to the earlier theoretical chapter, they are more applied in the sense that they describe issues that are more directly implicated in the processes of observation utilised in analysing the materials presented in the empirical chapters that follow.

#### ***4.2. Materials for Analysis***

The materials analysed are primarily in the form of documents or texts. They include more than 15,000 newspaper articles collected between 12/9/01 and 31/1/05 – both reports and opinion pieces – the proceedings of relevant parliamentary debates – ten studied in detail –

and other texts generated throughout the controversy, including those produced by various interested parties. The public nature of all these materials means that others can obtain them for the purposes of criticising my interpretations – and it lessens the need for me to consider ethical issues regarding informed consent (Silverman, 2000: 201).

The newspaper articles were acquired as the controversy unfolded and relevant articles gleaned and an archive constructed over time. Since the issue of Iraq has been high on the public agenda since 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001, and persists at the time of writing (February 2005), this required a high degree of organisation. No claim is made to the archive being statistically ‘representative’ of the coverage. Since my interest in their content is not directly statistical – I am not using them as a ‘sample’ from which to make statistically inferential generalisations about the overall population – this is not overly problematic. The point was not to collect materials which could allow construction of a summary map of the debate overall, but to make it possible for the regularity of particular issues or practices to be identified.

As my regular paper, *The Guardian* was obtained consistently throughout the process of collection, whilst consumption of other newspapers fluctuated. All the British national dailies were obtained when ‘defining moments’, such as parliamentary votes publication of reports and protest marches, occurred. When this was not possible, gaps were filled via relevant websites where available. Particular effort was made to obtain materials whose content received widespread discussion in other media. The only paper systematically omitted from the archive was *The Daily Star*, primarily due to its minimal ‘hard’ news content.

With reference to parliament, at an early stage, the decision was made to deal with copies of Hansard rather than with videos or audiotapes of parliamentary activity. This was based on the impracticalities of trying to obtain these other types of material, and the logistics of transcribing and analysing them. I recognise that

Hansard is 'cleaned up' in the sense that messy and dialogic dimensions of speech such as overlap, speed, tone, volume are omitted, and that the debates in the UK parliament are highly formalized rather than conversational in format. However, since I am not trying to do a form of analysis that *requires* that these features be preserved this is not overly problematic.

The other resources included campaign materials produced by groups such as the Stop the War Coalition, and political speeches made by relevant members of the US and UK governments – most of which were available online, albeit also in 'cleaned up' form.

These empirical materials were used in a manner consistent with Lynch's 'post-analytic ethnomethodology', in so far as they were utilised as: 'a spur to the imagination rather than as proof of hypotheses' (Lynch, 1993: 116). I have not attempted to produce a definitive account of the controversy, but have explored particular regularities, and their context-dependent significance. The project is therefore an exercise in the exploration of this material rather than searching for an explanation for the controversy's existence, aimed at achieving a nuanced understanding of some of the themes recurring in some contributions to the public debate.

In keeping with this, the analyses in following chapters proceed through 'rhetorical induction' (Edmondson, 1984), whereby selected examples are described and analysed in detail, and advanced as indicating other more general and regular processes. Obviously a high degree of selectivity ('cherry-picking') is involved with regard to such examples, and trust required on the part of the reader regarding the existence of other such cherries. In stark contrast to other similar studies, for example, Hackett's (1993; also see Hackett and Zhao, 1994) study of US local news coverage of peace protests in the first Gulf War, every care is taken to include information allowing any inquisitive or distrustful reader to directly locate all examples for themselves.

This inductive process is broadly in line with the procedures involved in critical discourse analysis (CDA), in particular

Fairclough's (1992: 37) 'textually oriented' form. I proceed via a synthesis of description, interpretation and explanation (see Fairclough, 1989: 109). In my analyses, an example is provided, which is not to be viewed entirely in isolation, its context specific significance in terms of what it 'means' and what it 'does' are characterised, and a possible reason for it occurring when and where it does is then provided, woven into a wider narrative about the regularity of other similar, and different, practices.

Whilst I accept that it is important to try to be clear with my writing, I am also sensitive to the degree to which controlling its meaning is not possible (see below). If we feel the need to formulate a gold standard for all research, then the best such standard available is probably the question: 'have the researchers demonstrated successfully why we should believe them?' (Silverman, 1993: 25). It seems to me that this is not something that can simply be answered in advance of reading a specific analysis. Regardless of the specific methods utilised, what surely matters more is the richness of the analyses conducted, and how well a piece of research can be connected up with other materials beyond those used to generate it. As such, questions regarding the specifics of why I have done what I have done when I have done it are an integral part of the analyses themselves, so answers to such questions should be apparent in and through the analyses in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to engage in some advance characterisation, including the specific 'phenomena' towards which my attention is directed.

### ***4.3. Analytical Foci***

The subsequent discussion leads me to settle upon directing my attention towards the importance of the interconnected issues outlined below. Rather than build up to a glorious conclusion, I have decided to state these at an early stage so as to focus my discussion early on



and hopefully enable the reader to appreciate their interrelatedness as my discussions unfold.

The list should be sufficient to demonstrate that, whilst I am attempting to develop an analytic sensitivity towards the operation of moral asymmetries, I am not simply reducing all analysis to their description. Instead they are but one route into analysis.

My analytical foci include:

- Formulaic phrases and recurrent rhetorical flourishes
- Meaning and connectivity – intertextuality, and other discursive resources drawn upon, or mobilised in debate
- Framing processes, and attempts at delimiting the terms of a debate, and other boundary work
- The negotiation of questions of legitimacy regarding the positions adopted
- Hedging, disclaiming and other attempts at protecting speakers' identities, as well as what they indicate about the constraints within which speakers are operating (or perceiving themselves to be)
- The action orientation of utterances – what they are attempting to do
- The sites of agreement between opponents, and their degree of mobility
- Techniques of problematisation – evidence of the refusal to accept the contributions of one's opponents

My recurrent readings of the materials collected were conducted with a view to exploring the presence (and absence) and local specificity of these themes.

#### ***4.4. An Analytical Strategy, Not a Method?***

Andersen (2003: *xiii*) distinguishes between a method and an analytical strategy claiming that a 'method' implies that an object is observed, leading to the production of what is considered true

knowledge, which requires creation (and following) of rules and procedures so as to ensure that this can take place. In contrast, an analytical strategy shifts attention to a 'second order' at which observations are observed (and recognised as observations), something which involves the (analytical) de-ontologisation of the social world (also see Luhmann, 1990: 67). What is important is not the implementation of a set of procedures, but questions about what strategies enable the generation of critically different forms of knowledge than those already existing.

According to Andersen's approach, the most important issue becomes:

what possibilities for observation unfold when the concern is no longer given objects but, instead, the question of how problems, individuals, interests – all kinds of social identities – come into existence as and within communication

(Andersen, 2003: xv).

As much as considering what types of arguments are used, I am also trying to explore my own possibilities for observation and argumentation. In keeping with this, my general approach is best characterised as 'constructivist', with an emphasis upon processes of discursive work involved in the emergence and constitution of particular social 'phenomena'. Language is therefore not viewed only as a system of symbolic representation, but also as something used to accomplish things – specific utterances have an 'action' orientation' (Potter, 1996: 108), and are therefore seen as performative (Lash, 2002: 216; Marks, 1998: 105).

As someone interested in language, it would seem appropriate to reflect briefly upon my own use of it, something problematic in the same way as all other forms of self-reference. Obviously I am writing, which has an action orientation (in this specific case, the attempt to generate and circulate knowledge in order to persuade specific readers to award a particular qualification). The words used, and the concepts

invoked are important for the ‘understanding’ engendered in a reader, yet I am unable to directly control the possibility of readings going beyond my intentions (López, 2003: 144). There is no apparent solution to this, assuming that it is a problem. Clearly it would be to my advantage to make what I am saying as clear as possible. However, attempting to determine precisely what someone may take from what follows is obviously impossible too. The best way of engaging with this on my part is perhaps to try to anticipate some of the more likely ‘misunderstandings’ of what I am doing and incorporate clarifications that will forestall them into what I write.

In this regard, I should clarify one aspect of the approach that I am adopting, which is often misunderstood – the question of my ‘constructivism’.

#### ***4.5. Constructivism and a ‘Two Front War’***

In his sympathetic assessment of Luhmann’s work, Rasch (2000a: 74) describes how constructivism often finds itself embroiled in a ‘two front war’ against both realism and idealism. It is accused of paying either too much or too little attention to ‘reality’. In a manner analogous to the apparent fate of the British New Labour Party, by trying to be both and yet neither of two available alternatives, it has often made two sets of enemies, and ultimately pleasing no-one. According to Rasch (2000a: 82-3) this problem is addressed by a constant oscillation between idealism and realism, which has a particular logic to it.

In order to forestall the automatic attraction of similar criticisms to myself, it will perhaps be useful to try to clarify some of the issues (misunderstandings) that lead towards this controversy, by considering what it is that Luhmann’s epistemology considers ‘real’.

Despite Luhmann’s claim that discussions of ‘realism’ are potentially endless, and highly unproductive (Luhmann, 2002: 64) his theory invokes the term ‘real’ but has something slightly different in view than its usual ‘referent’. According to Hayles (in Rasch, 2000a:

190), what systems theory directs us to is not the world, as such, but our relations or interactions with it. What we can know about is our interaction with the thing we call the world – how we make sense of it, and what we do in order to deal with the fact that we cannot know it in isolation from ourselves.

In keeping with this I have decided to try to avoid direct reference to stable psycho-social features among the people whose discursive contributions I am studying which may attract the criticism associated with Discursive Psychology of viewing people as a one-dimensional or disembodied '*homo rhetoricus*' (Hammersley, 2003: 763). However, consistent with my appropriation of Luhmann in particular, I do not claim to be directly studying people at all, so the criticism is not strictly relevant. I am studying the relationship between communicators, and other communication, something which *might* be assisted by having a neatly fleshed out conception of the human being, but does *not* strictly require one.

When it comes to the study of communications, the 'reality' being addressed is not the reality behind a claim or communication – the truth of what is claimed, or the materiality of what is referred to by it – but the reality of the communication itself having occurred, and the connective possibilities it enables. This is similar to the Foucauldian sense in which the materiality of a statement is located in its 'capacity to be repeated' (Bernauer, 1990: 106).

According to Lash (2002: 111) it is this understanding that 'communication is the fabric of the real' that is Luhmann's great strength. In his work on the mass media as a social system, Luhmann (2000: 3) states that: 'It makes good sense [...] to regard the real reality of the mass media as the communications which go on within and through them.' If we can extrapolate from this a little, what becomes important is not any 'referential' relationship between a communication and an 'object', but the significance of the communication itself. Whether or not this is precisely the 'materialism of the incorporeal' that Foucault (1981: 69; also see

Foucault, 1977c: 169) advanced is unclear, but it does connect with Foucault's assertions about 'the statement' which:

is linked [...] to a 'referential' that is made up not of things, facts, 'realities', or 'beings', but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it.

(Foucault, 1972: 91).

It is therefore concerned with what Foucault calls 'spaces of differentiation' (Foucault, 1972: 92) and not direct relations (or not) with some postulated material reality.

Take, for example, an assertion of the form 'I am not a structuralist' (something which Foucault and Luhmann both repeatedly denied – see Luhmann, 1995: 278-82; Foucault, 1993: 202, 1991a: 72). What would be focused upon is (primarily) not the veracity of the claim – whether the speaker (really) 'is' a structuralist – but the reality of it having been said, its context specific significance in terms of what subsequent connections it makes possible. According to my approach instead of 'is it true?' we would ask 'to what it was produced as a response?' What is it about the space in which it occurred that 'required' it? To what did it connect? Moreover, how did it (re)position elements within that space: where was it designed to lead?

Here we are in the realms of what Luhmann terms 'second-order observation' – the observation of observations (Luhmann, 1998). It should be clarified that such observation does not claim superiority: 'Neither any exception to the general conditions of observation nor any "higher" or "better" knowledge is claimed for second-order observation' (Luhmann, 2002: 65). It does not overcome the blindness that is automatically involved in all observation, but makes it apparent (Roberts, 1999: 38), and renders everything contingent (Luhmann, 1993b: 769).

There are strong resonances between second-order observation and Derrida's deconstruction (Luhmann, 1993b: 766), in so far as both

can be used to take apart, or undermine, the assumption of a stable relationship between presence and absence (on affinities with Derrida particularly in mutual opposition to Habermas and Gadamer, see Harrison, 1995: 88; Rasch, 2000a: 55; also see Teubner, 2001).

Personally, I would not feel uncomfortable being described as a deconstructionist, since part of what I am doing problematises presumed distinctions. However, what I am doing has not emerged directly from an encounter with Derrida.

Some of the criticism regarding the issue of 'reality' emerges from a regular conflation of this 'contingency' with 'arbitrariness', or a refusal to acknowledge a distinction between the two (Rasch, 2000a: 78). To label something 'contingent' is to advance the claim that it *could have been otherwise*, which is not the same as saying that it was arbitrary, or could have been absolutely any way. In saying that something could have been otherwise, one is also accepting that it *was not otherwise*, i.e., that it 'really' occurred and had some associated effect(s).

This type of emphasis – asking questions about the what, how and why – rather than the truth or reality of claims means that the approach implied resonates with the 'strict constructionist' approach to social problems which attempts to focus upon claims and their 'articulation' rather than upon the 'ontology of the described' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993: 44). Whilst such a 'strict' approach is difficult to sustain consistently (see Best, 1993; 1995 for sophisticated but hostile critiques), it is questionable that difficulty automatically equals illegitimacy.

Ibarra and Kitsuse's approach is developed in reaction to a critique of the constructionist position, made by Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) in coining the term 'ontological gerrymandering'. They argue that there is something problematic (and epistemologically inconsistent, see Best, 1993: 114) about researchers who are willing to observe the constructed 'nature' of claims made by those contributing to the discourse around a social problem under study, noting the contingencies and interests at stake, but exhibit an unwillingness to

accept that their own claims can be subjected to the same form of ironisation (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985: 216; also see Potter, 1996: 183-4). So when a constructionist researcher, after analysing the constitutive work of a set of claimants, provides their own evidence for what 'really' is, or should be, the case – whether or not something should or should not be considered a problem – they are lapsing into a non-reflexive realism or 'objectivism'.

Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993) make an attempt to reformulate and re-orientate the constructionist project in response to this critique. For them, what is important is the 'condition-category' rather than the 'condition' as something real or unreal. They are not directly interested in the referential aspects of claims (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993: 30), but in a manner similar to Luhmann, more the autonomous reality of claims themselves. The location of their gaze is different, and arguably a little more difficult to understand.

In this regard, Woolgar and Pawluch's (1985) critique, and the concept of ontological gerrymandering, can be put to work. Attending to contributors' attempted manipulation of what is and what is not the case is surely one way to probe the significance of the distinctions they draw, and the observations they make whilst making arguments. Indeed, Potter (1996: 184-5, 200) argues that 'ontological gerrymandering' can be used to refer to any case where a specific argumentative terrain is selected from several options. In keeping with my remarks on the 'repressive presence' in the previous chapter, I think that attending to such issues as claims about what is and is not the case will be an extremely productive way of thinking about the proximal processes of inclusion *and* exclusion involved in restricting the space within which a particular debate occurs, as well as the way in which morally asymmetric distinctions are negotiated and evaded.

Despite his own protestations about it being unnecessary for Conversation Analysis (CA) to engage in dialogue with poststructuralism (Schegloff, 1997; 1998; Wetherell, 1998), Schegloff's (1998: 514) 'why that now?' question is resonant with such a focus. Of course, for Schegloff it is only relevant to the analyst

if observably relevant as a problem to the member. To some degree I am taking this on board, and the main way in which my approach is influenced by CA is the importance of discipline in this respect – attending to the issues with which I am concerned as primarily relevant to the people involved.

Whether you are making claims, or making claims about the claims of others, you will of course end up talking about reality in some sense – just as even Derrida has to end up making assertions about presence – there seems little possibility of escape because our hegemonic communicative practices are realist. Therefore, despite my stated emphasis, and the fact that some form of purity is neither possible nor desirable, I will inevitably be open to criticisms as inconsistent when making assertions about what is going on in a given instance. This problem arguably raises some wider questions about the extent to which word limits exert a coercive realist effect upon writing processes, but I have no space to go into that here! Suffice to say, I am entirely comfortable with my observations being open to a degree of ironisation.

#### ***4.6. Locating (Dis)agreement***

One obvious question to ask about any controversial situation is what is the disagreement about – what is the source of controversy? Another, perhaps less obvious question, concerns the position of the disagreement – where it is located? Within what ‘dimension’ of the discursive space is it located?

According to Gadamer (1975), even when there is disagreement, there must also be some agreement against which it can gain its significance, even if it is only agreement regarding what the disagreement is about! There is, of course, no good reason to assume that this location will be relatively stable. As a debate unfolds, the point(s) of disagreement may shift about based upon who says what to whom.



In the founding text of rhetorical psychology, Billig (1996: 55) views the argumentative process as extremely dynamic, with the constant potential for the 'point of disagreement' to shift:

Once an argument starts, words which have been used non-controversially can suddenly find themselves in the forefront of controversy, as the momentum of the argument pushes the disagreement into hitherto unsuspected areas

For Billig, rhetoric is fundamentally about persuasion, specifically processes of justification and criticism (Billig, 1996: 117), although since their successful achievement cannot be assumed, the argumentative process is largely about a 'search for the last word' (Billig, 1996: 138).

Since much politics take the form of struggling over 'appropriate descriptions of events' (Patton, 2000: 28) or attempts at narrowing the definition of a given situation to one that is favourable (Manning, 1985: 26), it is important to consider the dynamics of how things are closed down as a strategy pursuing 'victory' in an argument. What is involved prior to any moment of closure? How might any such closing, work? How does a debate unfold (or indeed, fold up)?

Billig sees argumentation as (potentially) infinitely open – something of a swirling, whirling contest in which 'each argues that the other's justifications are unjustifiable' (Billig, 1996: 131). Whilst infinite problematisation may be theoretically possible, forms of problematisation seem to stop or stabilise eventually, and therefore, what surely becomes interesting is the specific place that it stops, and the manner in which it does so.

In his interpretation of the Thatcher government's success in achieving office and re-orientating the British political spectrum, Hay (1996) focuses upon its successful framing of a discursive context to its advantage – primarily around the 'winter of discontent' as a crisis requiring radical intervention. A meta-narrative to this effect was constituted over time, facilitating Thatcherism's success by exerting an

organising influence over the events which subsequently occurred so that they would fit in with it. He claims that it was not press indoctrination that was at stake, but: 'the ability to frame the discursive context within which political subjectivities are constituted, reinforced and re-constituted' (Hay, 1996: 261).

According to this account, the space with which we are concerned, the 'agreement' involved is not a single point, but an area of 'containment' (or in Foucauldian terms, dispersion), a terrain with a degree of variability, and with borders which are policed.

The possibility of some sort of limiting or squeezing of space is also a theme present in other work on Thatcherism (Phillips, 1996; 1998), which explores how its success was due to the widespread circulation and penetration of its 'key words and formulaic phrases' within. Phillips cites examples such as 'choice' and 'value for money', and argues that they operated to 'encourage interpretation within a certain *range* of meanings' (Phillips, 1998: 855, original emphasis).

According to Fowler, from whom Phillips draws the concept, formulaic phrases are stylistic templates serving three roles:

First, formulaic patterning is cohesive in effect: recurrent patterns provide a set of stylistic 'templates', homogenizing the discourse. [...T]heir widespread dispersal through the language of all of the newspapers, provides a 'cue' to readers to recognize all of this as *the same discourse*.

Second, formulaic phrase patterns are generative. They are an important mechanism in facilitating the generation of new instances of 'it' in the discourse [...]

[Thirdly] they have a levelling or equating effect, causing different matters to be perceived as instances of the same thing.

(Fowler, 1991: 173-4, original emphasis).

In a rhetorical spirit, we can perhaps summarise these roles or functions more alliteratively as recognition, (re)constitution, and reduction, all of which seem consistent with a squeezing, closing and connecting process.

Interestingly, Phillips' account notes the extent to which Thatcherism's opponents shared such words and phrases, thereby serving to naturalise them (Phillips, 1996: 229) as 'commonsense'. In particular she identifies the way in which the Labour Party shared a common frame of reference (Phillips, 1996: 212), often challenging the words and phrases '*within the terms of Thatcherist discourse* and [were] therefore not a challenge to the discourse itself.' (Phillips, 1996: 224, original emphasis; also see Fairclough, 2000: 10, on the 'not only...but also' logic of New Labour's discourse).

Accordingly, it seems that there is the potential to legitimate your opponents' claims by engaging with them in particular ways – making their part in the controversy seem legitimate (Billig, 1996: 252). Billig uses the example of holocaust denial and how trying to argue with those who deny its occurrence as if they were open to persuasion can make them seem reasonable in ways they do not deserve, and can therefore be a self-defeating strategy. If we follow such ideas through, then it seems possible that you can accidentally legitimate the arguments of your opponents by engaging with them in particular ways which fail to problematise the way in which you are (dis)agreeing with them (also see Smith, 1994). This directs attention towards issues such as whether or not opponents might be using the same words in different ways. In order to communicate, they do not necessarily have to achieve intersubjectivity in the sense of a union of consciousness, so it is possible for them to, metaphorically, share signifiers without sharing signifieds. Opponents can use the same words, without necessarily referring to the same things with them, yet may 'assume' that they are talking about the same things (Rescher, 1993: 141), and this is something to which I need to be sensitive when examining the spaces in which agreement and disagreement occur.

#### **4.7. *Creating 'Difficulty'***

It is worth recapping that for Luhmann 'communication' occurs via the synthesis of three selections – information, utterance and

(mis)understanding (Luhmann, 2002: 157), such that differential interpretation of the same word by people does not bring communication to a halt (Esposito, 1999: 98). Communication is 'experienced as successful' when the three selections form a unity to which 'further communication can connect' (Luhmann, 1995: 243). That is what makes autopoiesis possible. Misunderstanding is not precluded, since communication does not rely on transmission, or on a successful union of consciousnesses.

According to my appropriation, it is not the autopoiesis of a given system that is at stake as much as the *actualisation of connective possibility*, and the interconnection of particular chains of communication, along with the question of the degree to which a discursive space is closed via the application of moral asymmetrical distinctions.

As should be clear so far, I am adopting a conception of communication that includes the possibility that a particular communication or observation *can* be rejected by its 'receiver'. Communication involves a selection on the part of its 'recipient' (Rasch, 2000a: 148), and therefore does not automatically receive what Austin (1975: 117) calls 'uptake'. Clearly this avoids me assuming a particular determinist version of a communication's 'impact'. Whilst Luhmann's version keeps the possibility of rejection open, and therefore a conception of direct 'control' is absent from what I am trying to conceptualise, this does not mean that some form of coercion, seduction or shepherding is also absent.

Based upon a variety of sources, I have come to a position on what I wish to term 'difficulty' – the stuff of the 'moral certainty' – which is meant to connote a non-deterministic, but normative (in the ethnomethodological sense of moral accountability, see Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984) conception of social influence.

In her overview of the constructionist approach to social problems, arguing for the centrality of morality in claims-making, Loseke (1999: 11, 49) constructs an ideal-typical model for the 'perfect claim'. She argues that it is possible for claimants to construct

an 'indisputable morality' (Loseke, 1999: 59), such that disputation becomes extremely difficult – if you try to argue with it, try to disagree, then you risk placing yourself beyond the boundaries of legitimate debate. One obvious example is the commonly asserted 'need' to 'protect' the 'innocence' of children which informs and constrains much contemporary debate. If we view morality as about the construction of 'preferred emotional orientations' (Loseke, 1993: 211), then we can begin to appreciate the demands that can be made of people in a controversial situation, including the risk of any contribution they make being disqualified.

Loseke (1993: 207) also usefully directs attention to the importance of understanding 'people production' as a 'rhetorical practice' which seems integral to much claims-making, as well as the way in which it becomes morally loaded with regard to the worthiness of particular productions (of people) vis-à-vis sympathy or condemnation (Loseke, 1993: 209). Whilst she does not invoke Foucault, one can see how such ideas could be connected up with his in terms of inclusion/exclusion and in terms of the production of 'types' of person as based upon the 'will to knowledge' (see Foucault, 1978; 1979), and with other differentiations between the worthy and unworthy, and the resultant moral asymmetries. One thing that becomes important here is the allocation of 'worthiness' vis-à-vis the right to a hearing, and the right to dispute. Who can legitimately contribute arguments, or make legitimate claims, and through what process is that established? What are the parameters of legitimate debate, and how do they operate? Does a distinction between reasonable and unreasonable represent the boundary of the permissible (see Mouffe, 2000: 24)?

In an article bemoaning the arguments that realists make to delegitimize those of a more relativist persuasion, Edwards *et al.* (1995: 28) identify a particular resource – 'undeniability devices' – which work to create difficulty for those wanting to disagree. They point to the arguments which realists deploy against relativism, specifically those invoking 'death and furniture'. Such undeniability

devices – banging a fist on a table, or asking relativists to deny that people have ‘really’ been killed in wars – create ‘difficult’ rhetorical situations for those wishing to disagree, requiring their engagement in often lengthy rhetorical work, and allowing their responses to be dismissed as long-winded, or as red-herrings. Such ‘undeniability’ can be connected to Loseke’s ‘indisputable morality’, serving to make demands upon those subjected to them – it becomes risky and difficult to disagree in the face of the moral community which is seemingly invoked. Those considering dissent are asked: would you really want to be standing alone outside it? Such a situation would seem to be a context specific and practical form of interpellation (Hay, 1996: 264), a pushing and pulling, and a shepherding of people into specific (restricted, and probably negatively valued) subject positions if they refuse to agree on certain propositions. It can become ‘difficult’ not to express agreement (see Pomerantz, 1984; Potter, 1996) of at least a minimal kind.

Writing about the importance of metaphors in theoretical writing, López (2003: 15) discusses the existence of ‘discursive exigencies’ – the ‘tensions, incompatibilities and desiderata’ involved. This resonates with my theoretical chapter, including my discussions of moral certainty and moral asymmetry. Certain connections are not possible for epistemic reasons, but we can also potentially identify the existence of constraints upon enunciations in all contexts, not necessarily due to the absence of epistemic connective possibilities within a particular discursive formation, but also those with a more normative content – related to the mobilisation of various moral asymmetries – which can be more locally invoked so as to render particular potential contributions more difficult.

In relation to such issues, it is important also to acknowledge what is encouraged (Billig, 1996: 264) as well as what is made difficult, or is discouraged within a particular social situation. Thinking about the simultaneity of ‘encouragement’ and ‘discouragement’ may be one further way of thinking about the possible connections between Luhmann and Foucault on the respective

question of observation and power as constitutive or productive (and simultaneously also repressive) – of inciting particular productions rather than specific others.

We can arguably look for the wider discursive context, and how it constrains or impinges upon actors (epistemically, and morally or normatively) in their interventions which explicitly thematise it, and attempt to negotiate ways out of it and open up the available discursive space, and avoid negative evaluation. Again, we are back to the issue of ontological gerrymandering, viewed as an intervention in the order of discourse, as an attempt to control or police its boundaries, i.e., trying to maintain the prevalent forms of encouragement and discouragement. Alternatively, it could be trying to shift, move or change the specific order of discourse, or alter the logic of the wider discursive formation (or space) so as to change the dynamics of encouragement/discouragement, and make particular enunciations more or less difficult. One possible means of this occurring is by contributors regularly characterising their allies or opponents in some way or other, or claiming that their contributions should or should not be understood in particular ways, for example, by claiming or disclaiming particular identities.

#### ***4.8. Disclaiming, Reflexivity and Being Unexpected***

Whilst conducting some empirical analyses of the context of Section 28's failed repeal in the year 2000 (Burridge, 2001, Burridge, 2004), I observed the recurrence of particular rhetorical techniques involving speakers denying homophobia. This led me to the literature utilising the concept of disclaiming, specifically in van Dijk's CDA and Billig's more 'rhetorical' approach.

van Dijk employs references to disclaiming and denial in the context of the justifications utilised in defence of discrimination against ethnic minorities. He summarises it neatly as the 'introduction for a *but*' (van Dijk, 1992: 110), as in 'I am not racist *but...*', and views it as a reflection of transformations in the ways in which

prejudice is expressed and discrimination legitimated (also see van Dijk, 1991; 1998; Billig, 1996). Whilst appreciating the sophistication of van Dijk's analyses, and having a considerable political sympathy for what he is doing, there are two senses in which I want to deal with disclaiming differently.

Firstly, I would like to employ the concept in a less uni-directional sense – looking at the contrastive power of 'but' in negotiating difficult arguments on both sides of a given argument. Secondly, I am not sure that it is necessary to view its use as automatically reflecting a transformation. Of course, my position on this is also necessitated by my desire to avoid judging the veracity of claims made. For van Dijk, the move towards disclaiming represents a change in the superstructure of a base consisting of much the 'same old' prejudice. From the approach that I am adopting, that base is not of primary importance, if it is knowable at all.

My wish to use a somewhat 'depoliticised' version of disclaiming leads me back to its originators (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975) as well as more recent related developments (Potter, 1996; Antaki and Wetherell, 1999). This recognises that words such as 'but' are often utilised in face-saving activity which is socially and informationally cooperative (Schiffrin, 1987: 160), and orientated towards some form of consensus, without assuming that such activity is somehow illegitimate.

Hewitt and Stokes' (1975: 3) define a disclaimer as: 'a verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance doubts and negative typification which may result from intended conduct.' They deductively differentiate five types – hedging, credentialing, *sin licences*, cognitive disclaimers and appeals for the suspension of judgment – and argue that such techniques attempt to avoid potential negative identity typification, and therefore orientate towards perceived cultural constraints (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975: 11).

Potter's (1996) interpretation operates along similar lines, and is related to what he calls the 'dilemma of stake'. He recognises that social actors themselves often seek explanations at the level of



interests, and therefore:

[A]nything that a person [...] says or does may be discounted as a product of stake or interest. The referencing of such a stake is one principal way of discounting the significance of an action, or reworking its nature.

(Potter, 1996: 110)

Stake is a potential problem for a speaker, and a potential resource for those who wish to undermine what they are saying (Potter, 1996: 114). This means that speakers may be encouraged to avoid particular attributions of stake – and thereby avoid their arguments being rendered illegitimate. What therefore becomes important are the ‘practices through which stake is established and discounted’ (Potter, 1996: 114).

According to Antaki and Wetherell (1999: 11) there are other more generic rhetorical techniques which use a ‘but’ to ‘fireproof’ what a speaker is saying, including the ‘concession’. They identify a three-part structure – proposition, concession, reprise – which speakers use in making a ‘show’ of conceding a point in order to make their contribution less open to rebuttal. As an imaginary example, someone might say the following: ‘I do not like Talcott Parson’s work. He was obviously a very clever man. But his books are unreadable’. The assertion that he was ‘obviously a very clever man’ is a concession in that it pulls back from the original proposition, and displays the absence of a systematic ‘anti-Parsons’ stake. Antaki and Wetherell’s (1999: 24) argue that such techniques can be, but are not exclusively, political in a direct sense.

None of this is to deny the value of van Dijk’s analyses, nor to rule out the ‘political’ dimension of disclaiming, just to recognise that the associated issues can be viewed as more generic, and something that is often present (and recurrent) in the contributions of people on both sides of any argument, not just the one with whom I might disagree. As a careful reader will have noticed, it is also present in my arguments – I have just engaged in it here!

Such techniques are potentially useful to people in various different contexts as a means of resisting particular typifications, categorisations, and identifications, or forms of observation and recognition – a means of crossing from one distinction to another, or from one side to another in the attempt to avoid a moral asymmetry. It is this more generic context-specific significance that is of interest to me, as well as the arguably ubiquitous importance of ‘who’ and ‘what’ you are as you speak (see Wetherell, 1998: 394 on the occasioned and situated nature of subject positions). How does this phenomenon take on particular significance associated with the context in which it occurs? If it can be generally characterised as a form of reflexivity, and an orientation to, and problematisation of, expectations, to what is it particularly produced as a response? Again we are in the realms of the question: ‘why that now?’

#### ***4.9. ‘Criticism’ and the Role of the Researcher***

With respect to my own role, there are perhaps two main issues which merit discussion, the interrelated issues of ‘reality’ and ‘relativism’.

Potter (1996: 230-2) identifies three types of critique – the practical, critical and reflexive – all of which are legitimate, but which have productive tensions between them. The approach I am adopting is most akin to the third of these, which ‘moves in a more postmodern direction’ (Potter, 1996: 231), and recognises that its products are also socially constituted, and open to ironisation.

The critical approach, which I am distancing myself from, without denying its legitimacy, is ‘Critical’ in the Frankfurt school sense, and is explicitly motivated by a conception of liberation, and evaluates social arrangements in terms of their deviation from an explicitly formulated (utopian) normative base which envisions how the world would (should) work more fairly.

This is an issue used as a criticism of CDA in Schegloff’s (1997; 1999a; 1999b) critiques. Schegloff (1999b: 577) identifies a tendency within CDA which suggests that its authors ‘know basically

how the world works', and according to Potter (1996: 224) CDA treats the researcher's understanding of reality as factuality as unproblematic, something which again resonates with the notion of 'ontological gerrymandering' (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985).

Schegloff also criticises the approach as involving less discipline than CA, and as enabling 'self-indulgence' on the part of the researcher (see Schegloff, 1999b: 579). However, his unwillingness to name names on this, and the fact that the first analytic move in Fairclough's formulation of CDA is description, undermines his accusations somewhat. Nevertheless a sense of not getting carried away on the froth of my own political opinions is an important element of what I am trying to do, and is certainly more of a *potential* in more explicitly politically-directed work.

Whilst I undeniably have normative assumptions, and a vision of how the world could be better, which obviously impacts upon my observations, invoking it as a direct point of comparison with the materials I am analysing is far from my primary goal. It is clear that I am also refusing to choose between *science* and *politics* in the way that the choice is often posed. I am engaging in a piece of theoretically informed but empirically orientated research, which fits into neither category. I am writing, and therefore involved in producing 'theoretical effects' (López, 2003: 147), but these are not simply located *within* the respective controversies, but are also *about* controversy, morality and discourse more generally. Largely due to my having bought into the 'anti-representationalism' attributed to those authors usually described as 'poststructuralist' (see May, 1995) my primary aim is not to persuade the reader to take a particular position on the invasion of Iraq. Instead I am trying to encourage them to think about the significance of some of the processes through which the controversy unfolded.

Perhaps the most important thing about the stance I am taking is that both sides in each argument (including those with whom I agree) undergo a degree of ironisation. From the position I am taking,

I am quite willing to admit the contingencies involved in arguments with which I agree (in this case those protesting against the war).

These issues also raise the question of relativism, for which there is no satisfactory answer. I agree with (Edwards *et al.*, 1995: 33) that attempting to take a relativistic stance is not somehow 'morally bankrupt' and that it is important to engage in 'decoupling the implied equivalence between relativism and lack of political commitment' (Potter, 1996: 7). Clearly absolute relativism is actually impossible, and my orientation is probably better characterised as a form of radical pluralism, but this does not mean that I should automatically give vent to all my political anger, or that I should be worrying about the 'purity' of my 'science'.

Despite being sensitive to the sense in which knowledge, meaning, descriptions, observations are political in the sense that they can not be ideologically neutral, and that no reading is 'innocent' (López, 2003: 149; Rasch, 2000c: 22), I do not accept that this automatically means that I should embrace the identity of the activist as Alvarez (2001) advocates.

In describing a conflict, I am in one sense automatically participating in it (Rasch, 2000: 116) by attaching myself to it. However, it is possible for someone to write in such a way as to not automatically alienate those of a different political persuasion in advance of them engaging directly with the content of what they have written. To embrace activism, would imply that I was giving up on the possibility of communicating with political 'enemies', and that I was importing a good versus evil schema into the whole enterprise (and observing exclusively according to the code 'morality' in Luhmann's sense). I would hope that a more 'constructive' constructivist position was possible, whereby I am not so partisan as to be only preaching to the converted.

These issues also raise questions about the extent to which I can claim to be any different from those whose contributions I am studying. This is particularly pertinent since, I have been engaging in many of the practices in which I will subsequently claim contributors

to the public debate around the 'Iraq Crisis' are engaged, in order to position myself, and avoid negative typification – clearly engaging in disclaiming in Hewitt and Stokes' (1975) sense. In trying to justify what I am doing, and attempting to create a space for a contribution that is neither consciously 'merely scientific' nor 'merely political', I am arguably demonstrating my similarities with those studied.

According to Fairclough (1989: 141) there are a lot of similarities between what analysts and participants do, and this is particularly likely to be the case in qualitative work. However, I am engaging in a practice which aims to consider more than just one side in an argument (Jenkins, 1996: 12), and my enunciations emerge from a very different context – a different discursive formation – that of sociology (see Woodiwiss, 2001) that has its own conventions and makes particular demands upon me – encouraging and discouraging particular practices.

Despite these differences, I am not asking for some special exemption for myself, nor for my enunciations, and from the point of view of any observer my observations are open to ironisation in various ways. Hopefully the care taken to be clear about the 'how' and 'why' of my assertions as well as the 'what', and the manner in which my work is focussed upon the materials analysed, will mean that as few people as possible will feel motivated to engage in such ironisation!

Whilst it would be pretentious to claim that this thesis is an 'experience book' in Foucault's (1991d: 25-42) sense, it certainly represents a theoretically informed account of my intellectual *experience* of the processes and events leading up to and surrounding the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, as communicated in the material I analysed. In the chapters that follow I describe some of the regularities observable in the discourse produced in relation to the invasion, starting with the claimed relevance (or irrelevance) of Iraq to the more general 'War on Terror(ism)'.

## ***5. Links to the War on Terror(ism)***

We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

(Bush, 2001).

The military action against Iraq (beginning March 2003) emerged from a discursive space shaped by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (henceforth 9-11), and the ensuing so-called ‘war on terror(ism)’ (henceforth WoT).

Analytically I am not directly interested in resolving whether or not the invasion was ‘really’ part of the war on terror(ism), but the way in which connections between Iraq the WoT are made or denied in arguments made for and against the invasion’s legitimacy. This chapter examines some of the ways that connections were made between the two issues (if indeed they are viewed as separate), and whether any regularities are observable in the ways that any relationship is configured in contributions aimed at legitimating or undermining the case made for invading Iraq.

In keeping with the rest of my analyses, my approach views assertions of belonging, as involving normative implications regarding how subsequent observations should proceed. Often statements about what is the case also imply what should be the case. They aspire to organise subsequent contributions and map the parameters of legitimate dissent – a morality of recognition asserting that this is the case, and you should agree (if you do not do so already).

### ***5.1. WoT as a Formulaic Phrase***

Arguably the phrase ‘war on terror(ism)’ is ‘formulaic’ in the sense espoused by Fowler (1991) and Phillips (1996, 1998), the main

functions of which I have summarised alliteratively as recognition, (re)constitution, and reduction. The success that ‘war on terror(ism)’ has achieved as a definition of the current world situation implies that it has operated along these lines. When the phrase is stated, we all supposedly know what is at stake – it is recognised and reconstituted, and the complexity of events reduced. This is highly consequential, since as Fuller (2001: paragraph 1.11) points out the classification of the world situation post 9-11 has strong implications for ‘identifying the jurisdiction for resolving the conflict’. If the situation is understood as a ‘war’ then this will foster particular expectations about what follows.

In this regard, I need to do a little disclaiming of my own. I am continually invoking the phrase ‘war on terrorism’, and reducing it further to ‘WoT’ (so too ‘9-11’). Given my orientation to complexity, I am aware that this may invite accusations of performative contradiction. However, I hope that the reader will forgive this in the interests of economy of words, and now that I have mentioned it, will be immunised against any sinister ideological implications!

## ***5.2. Invasion of Iraq was Legitimate Because Part of the WoT***

One set of interconnected claims made in support of invading Iraq would deny the distinction between what I have already referred to as ‘two’ contexts. For these contributions, Iraq is part of the WoT, and this is the source of its legitimacy.

On the logic of the infamous with/against ‘us’ distinction, Iraq is allocated to the ‘against’ category, and is therefore to be treated in the same way as al Qaeda. As Lord Howell of Guildford [Conservative] put it: ‘[F]rom the US perspective, Iraq and terrorism are the same issue and the moral case is the same – that against unspeakable evil’ (Hansard, 2002e: 867).

Much of the justificatory talk in advance of the invasion involved assertions regarding the Iraqi government’s support for

terrorism, and the potential for it giving ‘weapons of mass destruction’ to international terrorist groups. For example, in his speech to parliament following the publication of the government’s dossier on Iraq’s WMD Tony Blair stated that: ‘[T]here is no doubt [...] that certain forms of terrorism in the middle east are supported by Iraq’ (Hansard, 2002b: 19).

The phrase ‘There is no doubt’ is clearly both descriptive and prescriptive. It was very common in arguments in favour of war, along with the closely related ‘There can be no doubt’. The constancy with which Saddam Hussein and Iraq were linked with terrorism, either as willing to engage in it, or provide it assistance – served as one way in which a connection was made with the WoT. The ‘risk’ of him assisting al Qaeda was raised quite regularly. Given that he had obtained and used WMDs in the past, and the work of UN weapons inspectors, who were supposed to verify Iraq’s disarmament after the Gulf war of 1991, was ‘incomplete’, there was allegedly the possibility that at some future date he might decide to cooperate with al Qaeda, supplying them with any such weapons that remained.

The US Vice President Dick Cheney spoke of this scenario as a ‘potential marriage’ (Philip Webster and Damian Whitworth, *The Times*, 12/3/02: 1). Whilst this admits some uncertainty – a potential not necessarily coming to pass – the risk of not intervening to prevent such a marriage was portrayed as so great that preventative military action was the only sensible risk-averse course of action. Absolute certainty was not required because of the extent of the negative consequences envisaged – a using the spectre of terrible consequences to advocate war. As George Bush (2002b) put it: ‘[W]e cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud’.

There was, however, a way to achieve a guarantee, according to Colin Powell:

[I]n this post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world, getting those weapons out of his hands is the only way to guarantee that he won’t use them again, or he won’t



make common cause and pass them on through his terrorist connections for use practically anywhere in the world.

(Powell, 2003b).

The logic runs as follows: ‘We’ do not know for certain that it will happen, but we can be certain of it not happening if we act decisively to ensure it is impossible.

This position was captured quite nicely by the recurrent phrase ‘inaction is not an option’ (or variations on it) (see for examples Julian Borger *et al.*, *The Guardian*, 12/3/02: 1; Ben Roberts, *Daily Mirror*, 9/9/02: 5) – another phrase aiming at reduction of the available legitimate options.

The ‘potential marriage’ also meant that Iraq and the WoT could not be ‘divorced’:

There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction [...] In focusing on Iraq, we should not forget the wider war on terrorism. We will not be able to rest on our laurels if we are successful in Iraq. As many noble Lords have said, we cannot stress too strongly the fact that Iraq cannot be divorced from the threat of international terrorism.

(Lord Inge [Crossbench], Hansard, 2002c: 949-50).

Such connections (potential or otherwise), made war on Iraq a part of the WoT; not necessarily equating to the whole thing, but, according to George W. Bush, a part nevertheless:

We’re at war. Iraq is a part of the war on terror. It is not the war on terror; it is a theater in the war on terror. And it’s essential we win this battle in the war on terror. By winning this battle, it will make other victories more certain in the war against the terrorists.

(Bush, 2004a).

Other contributions stressed that not only was Iraq part of the WoT, it was *central* to it. For example, according to US Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz: ‘The war on terror and disarming Saddam Hussein are not merely related; disarming Iraq is a crucial part of

winning the war on terror' (*The Independent*, 30/1/02: 19). What is important is that the issues are not separate but related, they are *the same* – one is a crucial part of the other. Later in the same article, Wolfowitz goes into some detail about the reasons for this – the 'potential for catastrophe', something that 'must' be avoided – the coming together of terrorists and WMD.

Many contributions in favour of the invasion of Iraq, also stressed this centrality long after George W. Bush declared that 'major combat operations' were over. Iraq has been variously described as 'the front line in the war on terror' (Con Coughlin, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 24/8/03: 22), 'the principal theatre of the global war against terrorism' (Editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6/9/03: 27), 'the central front in the war on terror' (Bush, 2004b) or the 'crucible' in which the conflict with international terrorism is to be fought (Blair, 2004c). Little attention was paid, by any of these contributors to the possibility that this might actually be a self-fulfilling consequence of the invasion.

The question of the directness of the conflict's emergence played a very important role in the debate, and sometimes posed a problem for those advocating war on Iraq. The speed and eagerness of response was arguably something that was considered as relevant evidence for how reasonable and legitimate the conflict was.

As early as October 2001, it was noticed, by some of those who would later oppose the invasion that the possibility of invading Iraq was creeping onto the agenda (Editorial, *The Guardian*, 10/10/01: 23). In his up-close-and-personal study of the Bush administration after 9-11, Woodward (2002: 49) claims that Donald Rumsfeld (supported by Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz) raised the possibility that: 'they could take advantage of the opportunity offered by the terrorist attacks to go after Saddam immediately' within a week of the attacks on the twin towers and Pentagon, and that Wolfowitz saw Iraq as more 'doable' than Afghanistan (Woodward, 2002: 83). In his following book on Iraq, Woodward (2004: 178) claims that Tony Blair committed British troops on 7/9/02, despite Bush giving him several

chances to keep British troops out of the action, also claiming that war was on the agenda even before the Bush administration took office, and citing 21/11/01 as a key date in terms of the drafting of plans (whereas Kampfner, 2004: 230 claims it was April 2002).

These types of 'revelation' can be problematic for the legitimacy of invasion – implying an irrational eagerness. Such potential problems, related to eagerness, arguably influence the degree to which some of those arguing in favour sought to reduce or minimise any direct relationship between the WoT and Iraq.

### ***5.3. War on Iraq was Legitimate Because Not Simply Part of the WoT***

In contrast to those contributions arguing that invading Iraq was directly part of the WoT, others argued that it was legitimate because it was not. In fact, it was precisely because it had a history independent of 9-11, that war was justified.

As Gieryn (1999: 58) points out in his account of the boundary work involved in distinguishing science as a legitimate domain of cultural activity, the co-presence of apparently contradictory arguments is not necessarily a cause for criticism (although Žižek, 2003 uses it as such). It is perhaps better understood as flexible discursive activity, occasioned in response to distinct rhetorical threats.

Undoubtedly such positioning in this case was incited by the need to avoid war being observed as a knee-jerk reaction to 9-11: the rhetorical threat being the accusation that it represented a reflexive 'lashing out'. This incitement produced, in part, claims such as that made by, Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean [Labour]: '[T]he issue of Iraq stands by itself: we would be debating it irrespective of what happened last year' (Hansard, 2002c: 871).

The types of evidence drawn upon within such claims include events occurring before 9-11, asserting that Iraq was 'on the agenda' long before. For example, in an interview as part of the BBC2 's

*Hotline to the President* programme shown in early September 2002, in which Tony Blair famously agreed that Britain would be willing to pay a 'blood price' (a reference to debates between Robert McNamara and Harold Wilson during Vietnam the war), Sir Christopher Meyer, the British Ambassador to Washington, claimed that when Blair and Bush met for the first time in February 2001 Iraq was the very first item on their agenda (Andy McSmith *et al.*, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6/9/02: 4; Paul Waugh, *The Independent*, 6/9/02: 6).

The sense in which the issue is 'not new' was emphasised elsewhere:

Iraq has been a central theme of Bush policymaking from well before he took office [...]

[E]ven if September 11 had not happened, he would still be using this middle phase of his first term to confront his blood foe over weapons of mass destruction.

(Roland Watson, *The Times*, 16/8/02: 20).

Here Watson claims that the conflict has been 'long in the making', and that the need for action is not *simply* a reaction to 9-11. Instead, in his evidence to the US Senate Armed Services Committee (9/7/03), Donald Rumsfeld claimed that it was the result of a change that 9-11 made to the administration's perception of an already existing threat:

The coalition did not act in Iraq because we had discovered dramatic new evidence of Iraq's pursuit of weapons of mass murder. We acted because we saw the existing evidence in a new light, through the prism of our experience on September 11<sup>th</sup>. On that day, we saw thousands of innocent men, women and children killed by terrorists, and that experience changed our appreciation of our vulnerability and the risks the U.S. faces from terrorist states and terrorist networks armed with powerful weapons.

(Rumsfeld, 2003b).

Rumsfeld stresses that Iraq was a longer term problem, and that 9-11 caused a re-evaluation of American interpretations of its seriousness. Along with other contributions such as Paul Wolfowitz's admission

that WMD were not really central but were settled on as a public justification for ‘bureaucratic reasons’ (in Tanenhaus, 2003: 145), it is also exactly the type of enunciation that has problematic implications for the legitimacy of the invasion, allowing those opponents of war to claim that the invasion of Iraq was not really anything to do with the previously stated reasons to do with Iraq itself.

In his personal account of the UN inspections process, Hans Blix, for example, claimed that: ‘[I]t’s clear that the U.S. determination to take on Iraq was not triggered by anything Iraq did, but by the wounds inflicted by al Qaeda’ (Blix, 2004: 169), a version of events echoed in the Butler report (2004: 70) – that 9-11 had changed the ‘calculus of threat’. If the invasion of Iraq was not really about Iraq then, for opponents to war, its legitimacy is highly questionable.

#### ***5.4. The War on Iraq was Illegitimate***

Despite the absence of neatness in anti-war arguments, relating to the relevance of the WoT, some of the ways in which they configured the relationship between WoT and Iraq are interesting, and some regularities are observable in the material I collected and analysed.

One of the main arguments used against the invasion was that it would have negative consequences because it would be observed as a war on Islam. For example, former Labour cabinet member, Frank Dobson argued that: ‘Military action against Iraq will be a principal recruiting sergeant for terrorism, and al-Qaeda will be delighted if the United States and Britain go to war’ (Hansard, 2003a: 311-2). Invasion of Iraq would cause problems for the WoT, actually increasing the problem of terrorism – acting as a ‘recruiting sergeant’ – constituting a type of deviance amplification. This would be self-defeating in terms of making ‘victory’ within the WoT more difficult, and making it more difficult to bring terrorists to justice (also see Scott Ritter, *The Guardian*, 19/10/01: 24; ISC, 2003: 34). Put more sarcastically after the invasion had taken place: ‘Sure, there might not

have been any terrorists in Iraq before, but they are now. Bush's claim about Iraq as a hotbed of terrorism has turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy' (Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, 2003: 168).

A similar contribution came from Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy on the eve of the war:

Although I have never been persuaded of a causal link between the Iraq-regime, al-Qaeda and 11 September, I believe the impact of war in these circumstances is bound to weaken the international coalition against terrorism itself, and not least in the Muslim world. The big fear that many of us have is that the action will simply breed further generations of suicide bombers.

(Hansard, 2003d: 786).

Kennedy denies a link between 9-11 and the Iraqi regime, and notes the likely consequences of war in terms of terrorist recruitment. Moreover, he identifies another self-defeating consequence – a weakening of the 'international coalition against terrorism'. The possibility that war would lead to fragmentation of the valorised 'coalition', or waste worldwide sympathy, was a prominent feature of much anti-war argument (George Galloway, *The Guardian*, 20/11/01; Judy Dempsey, *Financial Times*, 30/11/01: 9; Richard Dawkins, *The Guardian: G2*, 9/4/04: 9).

Many arguments implied that focussing upon Iraq was a *distraction* from what should have been the most urgent issue – al Qaeda – and should have remained separate. This 'distraction' argument was constant throughout the account of former White House 'terrorism czar' Richard Clarke (2004), but also made elsewhere:

Al-Qaeda is the real foe, not Saddam [...]

There is nothing wrong with continuing to put massive pressure on Saddam and working with the United Nations to get weapons inspectors back into Iraq.

But the greatest effort must be reserved for the greatest threat. And that comes from Al-Qaeda.

(Editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 16/10/02: 6).

This statement about the primacy of the threat posed by al Qaeda, and the implication that Iraq is a distraction, is combined with a disclaimer – that the *Mirror* nevertheless does not want do nothing about Saddam Hussein. This implies a perception that within the prevalent climate, without such ‘clarification’, an accusation that they wanted to do nothing about Saddam Hussein might be forthcoming. The significance of such protective measures will be pursued in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Another important set of arguments against invasion of Iraq made the accusation that the events of 9-11 were being used to legitimate a war conceived in advance. According to Keane (2003: 39), forcibly removing Saddam Hussein was mentioned as a priority by Bush in a BBC interview in 1999, a year before he was elected.

Relatively soon after 9-11, suspicions were expressed that a situation was being created in which invasion of Iraq would be a legitimate and logical next step – a ‘softening up process’ (Jackie Ashley, *The Guardian*, 27/2/02: 20; also see Andrew Murray, *The Guardian*, 16/11/01: 21; Scott Ritter, *Daily Mirror*, 2/8/02: 4).

Some observed the:

unconcealed desire of the conservative Hawks, led in the Bush administration by Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, to use the crisis as an opportunity to get rid of Saddam Hussein once and for all.

(Rupert Cornwell, *The Independent*, 10/10/01: 6).

Such alleged ‘opportunism’ is likely to be denied by those accused of it, despite the claims made by Woodward (2002) that war with Iraq was discussed by prominent members of the Bush administration in the days immediately following 9-11. Such revelations are counted as evidence of it having been conceived well in advance, as are other claims made by former members of the administration. Former member of the US treasury, Paul O’Neill, who was fired in December 2002, subsequently claimed that removing Saddam Hussein was

'Topic A' after Bush's inauguration and that discussions regarding an occupation of Iraq were underway in January and February of 2001, well in advance of the events of 9-11 (CBS, 2004; also see Woodward, 2004: 9). He is supported by former White House 'terrorism czar' Richard Clarke's assertions that Bush wanted to find (the) evidence *that* Iraq was responsible for 9-11, as distinct from wanting to find out if there were any such evidence (in Borger, 2004; also see Clarke, 2004) – consistent with accusations about the operation of a 'faith-based' intelligence attitude (Greg Thielmann [former US State Department weapons expert] in Singer, 2004: 100; also see Kampfner, 2004: 347).

Attempts to use a perceived longstanding *eagerness* to justify war against Iraq to undermine the case for war, is arguably reliant upon a morally asymmetrical distinction between *reasons* and *excuses*. This difference makes a big difference in terms of legitimacy – one responsive to events, the other preconceived and therefore less legitimate.

### **5.5. 'War' as a Metaphor**

In viewing the phrase 'WoT' as a formulaic phrase – in which several words are fused tightly together producing a single unit – I have been primarily dealing with it not as a 'war' on terrorism but as a 'war on terrorism'. Nevertheless, in trying to understand the prevalent public understandings of the Iraq conflict's relationship to the WoT, it seems necessary to consider the significance of the metaphor 'war'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the appropriateness of the war metaphor is taken for granted by those with an affirmative orientation towards those activities subsumed under it. It tends to be brought into question only by those critical of the policies pursued under its umbrella.

Journalist Jonathan Steele, problematised 'war's' legitimacy whilst discussing some of its metaphorical properties:



[T]he 'war' on terror should have remained what it initially was, a metaphor like the 'war' on drugs. But instead of being harmless linguistic exaggeration to describe a broad campaign encompassing a range of political, economic and police countermeasures, it was narrowed down to real war and nothing else.

(*The Guardian*, 22/11/03: 23).

It is arguably naïve of Steele to expect a political motif like 'war on terror' to remain *just* a metaphor. The metaphor was always likely to 'demand' something that looked like a war, with a clearly defined and locatable enemy. The alternative label, 'campaign against terrorism' (see *The Independent* newspaper between October and November 2001) never caught on as a sound-bite. This difference may have made a big difference in Bateson's (2000: 459) sense, possibly facilitating contentment with the political, economic and police-style countermeasures that Steele was hoping for. As differences go, it may have made more of a difference than that between a 'War in Iraq' and a 'War on Iraq' which was viewed as important by some (Kellner, 2004: 149; Bodi, 2004: 244). However, the 'campaign' motif was unable to frame the debate over the earlier action in Afghanistan, and had no presence in the debate preceding invasion of Iraq.

It seems that in the available stock of foreign policy-related tropes, war is very much at the front of the shelf upon which they are stored, making it unlikely to lose its hegemonic position as a major tool of international 'problem-solving'.

Another issue identified by those resisting the drive towards war with Iraq, was the importance of the failure to locate Osama bin Laden: 'With Osama bin Laden not caught, an alternative villain-in-chief is essential' (Editorial, *The Independent*, 28/8/02: 12). Since bin Laden could not be displayed as evidence of the success of WoT, a process of transference took place replacing him with Saddam Hussein. In contrast to bin Laden, Hussein could be located more easily since he was head of a state, not a rhizomatic organisation without definite location.

Others have criticised the notion of the WoT in more general terms, rendering suspicious its plasticity of application, and the question of what states have tried to ‘get away with’ in its name. One such diagnostic example in a media context comes from Naomi Klein:

The spectre of terrorism – real and exaggerated – has become a shield of impunity, protecting governments around the world from scrutiny for their human rights abuses [...]

The War on Terror was never really a war in the traditional sense. It is, instead, a kind of brand, a idea that can be easily franchised by any government in the market for an all-purpose opposition cleanser [...]

WoT™ can be used on any liberation or opposition movement [...]

As with all wars on terror, terrorism isn’t really the target; it was the excuse to wage the real war: on people who dared to dissent.

*(The Guardian, 28/8/03: 25).*

In the British (and American) context, because of the need for some semblance of liberal democratic values, marginalisation of dissent takes a rather more subtle form than in some of the locations Klein might have in mind. In the chapters that follow I discuss some of the processes through which dissent was marginalised, including the problems contributors had to address in pursuit of legitimacy in the public debate preceding invasion of Iraq. The first of these concerns the accusation that those against the invasion were guilty of ‘anti-Americanism’.

## 6. *The Spectre of Anti-Americanism*

I am not suggesting incidentally that the *Guardian* is anti-American, but I do honestly believe people should think carefully. Some of the rhetoric that I hear used about America is actually more savage than some of the rhetoric you hear used about Saddam and the Iraqi regime. Now come on, let's get a sense of perspective here. America is our ally, America is a country we have been together with over the past 100 years, stood together with in important times.

(Blair, 2003)

The point is so obvious that it has to be mentioned: it is perfectly possible to profoundly disagree with something, indeed to believe that rap music or racial prejudice or any other 'hateful' item should not exist or be tolerated, to genuinely loathe and detest it, and still be capable of peaceful co-existence in a world in which it exists. The glib way in which genuine political differences are consigned to hatred, and criticisms of American actions and policy become anti-Americanism or 'un-American activities', is a recipe for ending debate, not for making sense of mutual differences.

(Sardar and Davies, 2002: 55)

Of the many morally-loaded accusations circulating in debate preceding invasion of Iraq, the accusation of 'anti-Americanism' was one of the most recurrent, despite claims that it had experienced a 'demise' as a method of undermining criticism of US foreign policy (see Pilger, 2004: 24).

Broadly, the accusation is that the influence of 'anti-Americanism' renders problematic a contributor's position within the legitimate space available for the debate over invasion. To be anti-American, is to possess a stake – an irrational prejudice against America – that disqualifies contributions that the possessor might make.

### **6.1. *Opposition to War is 'Anti-American'***

A straightforward example of this process of accusation comes from the then proprietor of *The Daily Telegraph*, Lord Black who claimed that: 'Underlying most complaints against American policy towards Iraq is simple anti-Americanism' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14/2/03: 28). This description is clearly negative in intent, and such assertions seem to be aimed in two directions. Firstly, towards any present and future complaints against American policy – having already positioned their source as illegitimate – and secondly, to retrospectively undermine any arguments already made.

The influence of anti-Americanism is commonly deemed worthy of contempt, and often packaged via extreme case formulations regarding apparently 'absurd' positions that those affected by anti-Americanism take in contexts where orientations towards America are considered relevant.

When it became clear that military action was imminent, Alice Thomson generalised that: '[T]he question of whether to go to war with Iraq has been routinely addressed with an infantile anti-American rant' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 7/2/03: 27), a negative characterisation also related to a wider strategy of delegitimation via ascribing irrationality to those with whom the contributor disagrees. Whilst childhood is something that is celebrated in British culture, the description of adults as 'infantile' is clearly a negative reference to irrationality, and therefore illegitimacy, as is the term 'rant'.

Similarly, speaking in a parliamentary debate over the British Government's now infamous dossier on Iraq's WMD, Lord Strathclyde [Conservative] said:

Perhaps I may also express my horror at the growing visceral anti-Americanism that we see today [...] there can be no moral equivalence between the United States of America and an Iraq led by Saddam Hussein  
(Hansard, 2002c: 864).

As 'visceral', anti-Americanism is a bodily phenomenon, rather than cognitive and rational, and Strathclyde also implies that his opponents illegitimately portray the USA and Iraq as of equal value. Another example raising the issue of moral equivalence, but including more layers of extremely negative description, comes from Andrew Sullivan:

This is not to say that there are no good reasons to criticise American foreign policy [...] But the anti-Americanism I'm speaking of is not of this kind. It's designed to demonise the United States, to portray it as almost morally equivalent to the Islamist terrorism it is trying to hold back.

In fact, this anti-Americanism, which embraces the far left and elements of the far right, rarely proposes anything positive. And as it recites its mantras of contempt, and summons every American failing of the past 50 years without ever crediting America's successes, it marinates in its own resentment. It teeters on the edge of anti-semitism.

In its hatred of the United States it is close to finding excuses for the barbarity of Saddam Hussein, the cruelty of the Taliban or the malevolence of Al-Qaeda [...]

Even now, America has gone painstakingly down a UN route to achieve its goals. These are the facts. But to the new cult of anti-Americanism, facts don't matter.

*(The Sunday Times, 19/1/03: 21).*

This alleged anti-Americanism is negative in many ways. It is close to anti-Semitism; it hates America, and finds excuses for terrorism, and 'barbarity'. It 'marinates in its own resentment' and 'recites its mantras of contempt'. Perhaps the least violently negative accusation, but perhaps the most interesting, is that it is not open to 'the facts' which implies that this 'anti-Americanism' is closed to, and therefore lies outside the bounds of, reason.

These contributions all articulate disrespect for, and attempt to undermine the legitimacy of, utterances allegedly emerging from anti-Americanism's influence. The regular but relatively indirect circulation of similar accusations of anti-Americanism creates problems for those wishing to oppose war – their contributions were at

risk of being seen as anti-American and therefore illegitimate, and few are actively going to want to embrace such a characterisation. That said I am aware of a very small number of contributions directly affirming their own anti-Americanism. For example, author Margaret Drabble, wrote the following shortly after the 'war' was declared over by George W. Bush:

**My anti-Americanism has become almost uncontrollable. It has possessed me, like a disease. It rises up in my throat like acid reflux, that fashionable American sickness. I now loathe the United States and what it has done to Iraq and the rest of the helpless world. I can hardly bear to see the faces of Bush and Rumsfeld, or to watch their posturing body language, or hear their self-satisfied and incoherent platitudes.**

*(The Daily Telegraph, 8/5/03: 22).*

This is, however, extremely rare. From the contributions of most others opposing war, it seems that the widespread circulation of the relevance of anti-Americanism has implications for what they say and how they say it – leading to them engaging in particular forms of discursive work in an attempt to avoid it. The possibility of their contributions being marginalised as the product of anti-Americanism impinges upon them (acting upon their actions, and affecting the conduct of their conduct) requiring them to take steps to try and avoid such an attribution, indicating their recognition that anti-Americanism was part of the apparatus through which others could make sense of their arguments.

## ***6.2. Disclaiming and Displaying Your Credentials***

Resistance to the applicability of anti-Americanism is often pursued via contributors disclaiming the influence of anti-Americanism upon their contributions, or attempting to provide evidence to the contrary.

The most obvious approach is outright denial – a technique adopted by Baroness Turner of Camden [Labour]: 'Those who feel as I do - and there are many of us - are often derided as being anti-American. We are not' (Hansard, 2002c: 1001). Alternatively, some

chose to try and protect particular arguments – asserting their autonomy from anti-Americanism. For example, the Liberal Democrat Defence Spokesman, Menzies Campbell, adopted this technique: ‘[I]t is neither anti-American to question the policies of the Bush Administration nor unpatriotic to question those of our own Government’ (Hansard, 2002b: 43). Similarly, writing in the aftermath of war, Robin Cook claimed that: ‘To question the degree of Britain’s complicity with a Bush administration is not to be anti-American’ (*The Guardian*, 17/4/03: 26). Much more recently, and more generally, Mike Marqusee also claimed that:

A disbelief in the prerogatives or the beneficence of the American empire is not anti-American. Nor is it anti-American to be alarmed by features of US political culture, an alarm shared by many millions of Americans.

(*The Guardian*, 4/11/04: 25).

These three contributions can all be viewed as attempts at problematising the relationship between specific positions and ‘anti-Americanism’ – trying to undo existing or potential links regarding what would count as evidence for the influence of anti-Americanism. All three are examples of ‘ontological gerrymandering’ aimed at rescuing activity such as the questioning of policy from being absorbed into those other unspecified activities likely to be described as anti-American.

The notion of evidence is an important component in other techniques of disclaiming, which is far from surprising, since such ‘credentialing’ was one of the major techniques identified by Hewitt and Stokes (1975). What are more interesting than the presence of the technique itself, are the particular *types* of evidence that are advanced as indicating the absence of anti-Americanism.

One technique used is to point to a longstanding support for America, or its policies, a technique used by Chris Patten, a high-profile critic of the US’ developing policy towards Iraq, who described himself as a ‘lifelong Atlanticist’ (in Peter Riddell, *The Times*,

19/11/02: 16) and as an ‘Americaphile’ (in Jonathan Freedland, *The Guardian*, 9/2/02: 8). However, there were no guarantees in relation to this, and as Jurgen Habermas points out, subsequent to 9-11: ‘Even those who hold an unquestionable *record*, as I do among my American friends, needed to be cautious with regard to criticism’ (in Borradori, 2003: 26, original emphasis).

Often this involves pointing to a history of behaviour advanced as fitting a template of pro-Americanism with which a current position can be contrasted. The argument thus runs as follows: I have a history of support for America, but on this specific issue I am taking a different view, but this cannot be rendered illegitimate as emergent from a stake because of my more longstanding position. The contrastive use of evidence of a longstanding orientation could be usefully characterised as a reliant upon a ‘communicative career’ – a public history of communications consistent with that other view.

This contrastive approach was adopted by the late Lord Jenkins of Hillhead [Liberal Democrat]: ‘I have long been a natural pro-American [...] I raise these issues not with a desire to be negative [...] but because I believe that there is an urgent need for clarity on them’ (Hansard, 2002c: 893-4). Similar stress upon longstanding pro-American credentials is present in other contributions:

I am disturbed by the fact that I cannot support the American position on this matter. I have always attached huge importance to the relationship with the United States. I have long-standing and close relations with that country. I am bound to say, however, that I believe it to be wrong on this matter.

(Douglass Hogg [Conservative], Hansard, 2003a: 317).

The regret claimed regarding Hogg’s disagreement with US policy, again is again a self-protection device, which also stresses that it is out of the ordinary – a violation of expectations, given his communicative career.

A slightly curious example comes from Sir Peter Tapsell [Conservative]:



I have been a lifelong admirer and friend of the United States. I have often regretted that I was not born an American. I would love to have been a US federal Senator. If I had been, with my seniority, I would be chairman of the top committee there. I have been there innumerable times since, from Oxford, I debated there with 50 American Universities. I was in New York on the morning of 11 September last year, and I was there only a fortnight ago attending the Business Advisory Council of the United Nations of which I am a member.

Clearly I am not remotely anti-American, but the fact is that America has grossly mishandled the Palestine problem for many years, and is beginning to drag Britain into a very dangerous situation.

(Hansard, 2002d: 80).

Tapsell claims that he wishes that he had been born an American, and also states his denial in more direct terms 'Clearly I am not remotely...'. The forms of evidence he uses to indicate the absence of anti-Americanism include his having been there often for a variety of reasons. This, along with the fact that he was there on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, is supposed to protect him from accusations of anti-Americanism when he later criticises the US.

A similar structure is present in a contribution from Labour MP Tam Dalyell:

I am not anti-American. I was a member of the executive of the British-American parliamentary group. I share at one remove four times over a grandmother with Harry S Truman, and I hope to attend the celebrations in Missouri in May to mark the anniversary of his birthday.

(*The Guardian*, 27/3/03: 25).

This does not seem to be far from the adapted cliché 'some of my best friends are American'? In this case the evidence used is an indirect link via a family tree, and the desire to go to an anniversary (birthday) celebration, as well as membership of a pro-American organisation.

Similar familial connections are mobilised by Lord Richard [Labour]:

One of my children is now an American citizen; my granddaughter is an American citizen; another of my children lives in Philadelphia; and for seven-and-a-half years I myself lived in that country. I hope that at least I have been able to establish the credentials.

However, it is a fact that we now have in the United States probably the most right-wing Administration since the end of the Second World War. I think we have associated ourselves too closely with that Administration.

(Hansard, 2003e: 162).

As is commonly the case, the disclaiming involves use of a contrastive conjunction ('however') between the credentialing and criticism.

Elsewhere, Lord Morgan [Labour] claimed that he could not be anti-American because: 'I taught American history in universities for 30 years and greatly enjoyed it.' (Hansard, 2003b: 331). It is unclear, however, whether or not his enjoyment of the subject is determinant or whether simply having taught it should be considered sufficient!

### ***6.3. Separating the Government and People***

A slightly different contribution comes from the academic Richard Dawkins, attempting to invert the presumed relationship between positions:

Tony Blair's restless shifting of his justification for war undermines conviction, for standard 'lady doth protest too much' reasons [...]

Those of us opposed to the war are sometimes accused of anti-Americanism. I am vigorously pro-American, which is one reason I am anti-Bush. They didn't elect him, and they deserve better.

(*The Independent*, 1/3/03: 23).

Here, a dislike for George W. Bush is affirmed, and claimed as reflecting a pro-American stance – contrary to the apparently assumed relationship in the discourse of anti-Americanism. The accusation of anti-Americanism is turned back upon those who normally wield it – if Dawkins is pro-American because anti-Bush, then those speaking in Bush's favour are the real anti-Americans. Unfortunately from

Dawkins' point of view this logic never really caught on! Nevertheless, the discursive separation between the people of America or the nation itself, and its government or policy, which is implicit in Dawkins' contribution, was very evident elsewhere, including a *Guardian/ICM* poll taken shortly before the 2004 US Presidential elections (Alan Travis, *The Guardian*, 15/10/04: 4).

During the build-up to war, an Editorial in the *Daily Mirror* drew that very distinction:

**The Daily Mirror is not, as we've stressed many times, anti-American. That would be an absurd view of a great superpower which values the principles of democracy and freedom so highly.**

But we are increasingly anti-Bush. And with good reason.

*(Daily Mirror, 17/9/02: 6, original emphasis).*

This distinction was particularly evident in November 2003, in the war's aftermath, in the build-up to George W. Bush's controversial visit to the UK. For example, according to Paul Routledge: 'Anti-Americanism is wrong, because it is futile and muddle-headed to bear ill will against an entire people. The focus of our hostility must be the American government' (*Daily Mirror*, 14/11/03: 6).

It should be noted that this particular distinction, between the nation or its people, and its government or policy has become quite widely recognised as a technique utilised in the denial of anti-Americanism (Crockatt, 2003: 44), so there may be a degree of entropy relating to its successful use – similar to the way in which the fine distinctions drawn in the denial of other prejudices may be reflexively reduced in effectiveness over time.

#### **6.4. Reversal – Well You are 'anti-French'**

Another less evident technique, which peaked in use immediately before the invasion was launched, is the reversal of the accusation that prejudice is involved. When the US and UK governments abolished their pursuit of a second UN resolution to justify the use of military

action, blaming French intransigence – the threat of an ‘unreasonable veto’ – some critics claimed that this was scapegoating based upon anti-French prejudice, rendering the opposing accusations of anti-Americanism as themselves based upon a kind of unfairness:

When rational argument fails, we find a scapegoat. Who better than the traditional enemy, the French? The language that has been used in the debate against the French verges on xenophobia. Yet any criticism of the Bush regime is pounced on as anti-American.

(John McDonnell [Labour], Hansard, 2003d: 877).

In this context, we also see the only example, other than that of Margaret Drabble (above) that I have encountered of someone affirming anti-Americanism: ‘I know I am being anti-American, but other Members have had a good bash at the French this evening, and I am going to have a go at the Americans’ (Ronnie Campbell [Labour], Hansard, 2003d: 862). Those accusing the opposition to war of anti-Americanism are accused of hypocrisy since they are not averse to mobilising or relying upon prejudice in their own arguments. Unfairness, irrationality and illegitimacy are claimed to apply equally to them.

### ***6.5. Differentiating Oneself as Immune***

Many other contributors conceded that anti-Americanism was prevalent and influential, but denied that it applied to them and the majority of other dissenters:

No one can deny that anti-Americanism has increased and is increasing – or that it ought to be diminished, and would be if the US followed different policies. But this is not the whole or the true picture. Mainstream opinion is perfectly capable of drawing a distinction between America and its leadership. Mainstream opinion can also handle both the visit of the head of state of a historic ally on the one hand, and the legitimacy of a peaceful protest against his policies on the other.

(Editorial, *The Guardian*, 15/11/03: 25).

This claims membership of a majority constituency in both quantitative and qualitative terms ('mainstream'). It admits that anti-Americanism is present and claims that it is on the increase, and relies upon its presence elsewhere in order to distinguish itself as more reasonable.

It would seem logical that such distinctions are drawn in order to avoid the possibility of guilt-by-association – there is a need to clarify that even though those making the distinction are on the same 'side' as those more obviously guilty of anti-Americanism, they are not infected by the same apparently unreasonable and illegitimate perspective. If anti-Americanism is conceived as a disease, then they claim immunity to it.

When they distance themselves from particular positions, those who are more willing (or able) to provide evidence disclaiming the influence of anti-Americanism are arguably also repositioning those to whom the label would stick more easily. The person who is 'pro-American *but* anti-war' claims legitimacy partly at the expense of those who are 'anti-American *and* anti-war', simultaneously contributing to the exclusionary power of the description even as they try to avoid it themselves.

As well as overlapping with Hackett's (1993: 39) notion of a 'hierarchy of dissent' (also see Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 525) by implying that some reasons for dissent are 'better' than others, this also resonates with Smith's (1994: 204-16) distinction between the 'good homosexual' and the 'dangerous queer', drawn in the context of Section 28's passage in 1988. In Smith's account this is a distinction that is set up by a 'dominant discourse' (Thatcherism), promising inclusion to one half of the distinction at expense of the other. In this context, the moral asymmetry seems to arise in part as a by-product of the strategies used by those people resisting the imposition of a 'dominant' narrative, whose self-protection may serve to further marginalise people who are their context-specific allies – people upon whose existence they are reliant in attempting to generate their own claimed status as more legitimate.

This situation arguably illustrates the difficulty of finding a ‘way out’ of the relevance of accusations of anti-Americanism once they are put into wide circulation – people formulate ways of ‘escape’ which may tend to work at the expense of others, and help to sustain and reinforce the relevance of the accusation at the same time as they deny its applicability to them.

### **6.6. *Vagueness and the Absent Anti-American?***

Because of the nebulous way in which accusations and implications of anti-Americanism seem to circulate, one could be forgiven for viewing it as a ghostly presence – a spectre – haunting the debate, and intruding where it does not belong. Indeed, this is a metaphor utilised by Haseler (1986: 8).

The nebulous character begs a question regarding whether individual people are the source of it, or the sites for its dispersal. It does tend to be the case that the term ‘anti-American’ is used more as an adjective than as a noun – as it is in most of the examples here. Particular arguments made by those speaking against war, are potentially ‘anti-American’, rather than it being specific individuals who are described as such. The figure of the clearly defined individual ‘anti-American’ is almost absent from the debate. However, it is fair to assume that those least likely to achieve success in denying its influence upon them are likely to be people viewed as not having a communicative career fitting a template of pro-Americanism. It might be fairly easy to come up with a list of possible candidates using this logic, and one might speculate that George Galloway would fit the bill according to those who see value in utilising the description. Indeed, his name is recurrent when it comes to those people who are strongly associated with a package of other claims regarding illegitimate identities and characteristics, as will hopefully become clear in subsequent sections.

The vagueness associated with the process of accusation actually exacerbates the difficulties faced by those potentially

described as anti-Americanism. If you can not be quite sure what will count as anti-Americanism, it is not really possible to formulate or implement fail-safe techniques for its avoidance. Hence things are rather messy, and success not guaranteed.

Under the stark binary distinction apparently driving the so-called 'war on terror(ism)' those who are at risk of being made sense of as anti-American are also at risk of being seen as pro-Saddam (the two often being reduced to one another) – you are with us or against us. It is to those accusations relating to a 'pro-Saddam' orientation, and the modes of resistance adopted, that I now turn.

## 7. *Pro-Saddam Apologists*

Why do those on the left feel that in order to oppose a war against Iraq it is necessary to rehabilitate Saddam Hussein?

(Rod Liddle, *The Guardian: G2*, 14/8/02: 5).

[T]here is an almost wilful reluctance on the part of many anti-war people to engage with what kind of man Saddam is.

(David Aaronovitch, *The Independent*, 30/8/02: 14).

When you look back at the common sense and progressiveness of arguments against American intervention in Vietnam. Chile and the like, you can't help but be struck by the sheer befuddled babyishness of the pro-Saddam apologists.

(Julie Burchill, *The Guardian: Weekend*, 1/2/03: 5).

It is revealing that, where our parents during Vietnam were actually for something – ‘Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!’, they chanted – we have no positive agenda. (‘Sad-Sad-Sad-Dam!’ isn't terribly appealing.) All of the proposals are negative. Stop the War. Don't Attack Iraq. Stop. Don't. No. When you ask the protesters for a positive agenda – their actual alternative solution for the people of Iraq – they mumble something about stopping nastiness.

(Johann Hari, *The Independent: Review*, 7/3/03:4).

As already noted, one theme preoccupying public and academic debates about Iraq's recent history has been the representation and evaluation of Saddam Hussein. Another implication of the ‘you are with us or against us’ distinction is that it crudely polarises positions into for/against sides, not only in terms of a contributor's relationship to America, but also their relationship to Iraq and Saddam Hussein in particular. As such, those against war – the anti-Americans – are also ‘apologists’ for Saddam: if not against Hussein, they must be for him. They are therefore at risk of being viewed as positively disposed towards Saddam Hussein, and beyond the legitimate boundaries of debate.



Accusations of this sort were particularly observable in the press coverage during the build up to invasion launched in 2003. Indeed, as can be seen from the four quotations above, even those ostensibly on the 'left' in British politics appropriated this logic.

Given the negative implications of being viewed as an 'apologist', those arguing against war, were required to engage in another form of discursive work – disclaiming a positive orientation towards Saddam Hussein. Within the materials analysed, there are many examples of this practice, apparently aimed at creating or defending space for opposition to the war that will not automatically be categorised as 'pro-Saddam'. As has previously been noted, such contributions can be viewed as ontological gerrymandering aimed at altering the order of discourse – making alterations regarding what is to be taken as evidence for a particular attribution.

Before going on to look at some of the examples of people attempting to avoid being observed as apologists for Saddam Hussein, I will first give some examples of accusations made against 'pro-Saddam apologists'.

### ***7.1. 'Pro-Saddam' Accusations***

Before the prospect of an invasion of Iraq became the centre of the British media's attention, Christopher Hitchens wrote the following about the war in Afghanistan:

[A]s a charter supporter of CND I can remember a time when the peace movement was not an auxiliary to dictators and aggressors in trouble. Looking at some of the mind-rotting tripe that comes my way from much of today's left, I get the impression that they go to bed saying: 'what have I done for Saddam Hussein or good old Slobodan or the Taliban today?'

*(The Guardian: G2, 14/11/01: 5).*

Obviously, this is far from a positive assessment, but more importantly, Hitchens makes a quasi-nostalgic assertion which argues that, in contrast to the past, the contemporary peace movement, are

now auxiliaries (or in Lenin's terminology 'useful idiots') of dictators. It is almost irrelevant whether or not the consequences of their actions are deliberate or accidental; they are still viewed as illegitimate.

Hitchens is also careful to establish his credentials for legitimately pronouncing on this – he has no stake requiring criticism of the peace movement since he is a 'charter supporter of CND'.

Commenting on the world-wide anti-war marches and demonstrations in February 2003, Hitchens made similar accusations:

the demonstrations I attended or witnessed in London, Washington, San Francisco and elsewhere were actually organized by people who do *not* think that Saddam Hussein is a bad guy at all. They were in fact organized by groups who either openly like Saddam, and Milosevic, and Mugabe, and Kim Jong-Il, or by those who think that Osama bin Laden represents a Muslim cry for help.

(Hitchens, 2003: 10, original emphasis).

More crude examples of accusation were available in newspaper coverage of the Fire Brigade's Union's industrial action prior to the war, with claims that their actions meant that Union Chiefs were 'Saddam's Stooges' (*The Sun*, 14/11/02: 1; also see *The Sunday Times*, 16/3/03: 2, for similar accusations by a Conservative MP).

Another more subtle manifestation of such accusation, appropriating the for/against logic, comes from John Wilkinson [Conservative], speaking in the House of Commons: 'Saddam Hussein knows that those who are not against him are for him' (Hansard, 2003a: 308). Earlier in the same debate, George Foulkes [Labour Co-op] had made a similar comment about the implications of protesting against war:

I saw the marches that some of my colleagues took part in. They were reported with joy and glee on Iraqi television and they gave great succour to the dictator. I saw no placards on those marches saying, 'Saddam must go'.

(Hansard, 2003a: 292).

Giving 'succour' to Saddam Hussein would seem unlikely to be considered an attractive option. Not only would this mean being in favour of him, it would also be having an effect that was advantageous to him. In making him feel better about himself, and less likely to comply with the UN inspections, it would also be increasing the likelihood of war. There is therefore a type of guilt-by-association effect underway which identifies particular actions as endowed with meaning and consequences which most people would wish to avoid, thereby creating an obstacle for those wanting to resist the drive to war in that their actions may be understood in disadvantageous ways.

In some cases, their actions were indeed understood in such ways. For example, several months after the end of 'main combat operations', journalist James Meek quoted a returning Iraqi exile Mazzin al-Khazragi talking about the pre-war protest marches:

I was asked by somebody to go on an anti-war demonstration and I refused. I said that if the placards said 'No to war, down with Saddam' I would go, but I never saw anything on those placards against Saddam.

*(The Guardian: G2, 7/8/03: 4).*

Admittedly, this is only one example, and from a secondary source, but it implies that the anti-war campaigners, despite their sophisticated construction of a diverse coalition, made a public relations error in failing to stress clearly enough that they were both against the war *and* against Saddam Hussein.

If you do not clarify your position, then this leaves open the possibility that it will be characterised for you by others. There is therefore a kind of demand circulating for contributors to display their position, or deny disadvantageous understandings thereof.

## ***7.2. Saddam Hussein is Evil, But...***

There are countless examples, in the materials analysed, of people speaking or writing against the war and negotiating the obstacle of

potentially being seen as 'pro-Saddam', thereby indicating that they recognised the importance of avoiding it. For example:

It is important to re-emphasise that those of us who are opposed to war in this House and across our nation are not friends of Saddam Hussein. We were against him when he invaded Iran, we opposed him when he invaded Kuwait and we spoke out against him when he used chemical weapons against his own people. Unfortunately, the UK and US Governments supported and armed him in the 1980s [...] The American Administration is extremely well informed about Iraq's weaponry. As The Scotsman pointed out last Friday, Donald Rumsfeld probably still has the receipts.

(Mohammad Sarwar [Labour], Hansard, 2003a: 341).

Sarwar invokes a claimed consistency of position as evidence *against* him and those with his position being friends of Saddam Hussein, and alleges inconsistency on the part of those advocating war. Their position on Saddam Hussein is alleged to have changed considerably over time – their communicative career has involved more 'careering about' than his. Although this emanates from an apparently defensive contribution it also amounts to a claim to high ground in terms of legitimacy – we (those against war) have been consistently against him, whereas you (those for war) have not. In addition, his disclaiming is something that has been said before ('re-emphasise'), implying that disclaiming once is insufficient.

As the build-up to war intensified, journalist Don Mackay quoted Simon Weston, a widely admired Falklands war veteran regarding his position on the prospect of war:

Make no mistake, I'm no friend of Saddam. He's an evil despot and has to be removed. But if the US, Britain and their allies do not remove him with lawful world authority then we are making a big mistake.

(*Daily Mirror*, 22/1/03: 4).

This quotation, assuming its accuracy, is an almost perfect example of a concession in Antaki and Wetherell's (1999) sense – a three part statement in which the second part pulls back from the first somewhat

– making a concession, before the third carries on with the theme of the first. In common with so many of the other contributions I have examined, it includes the use of a ‘but’ in contrasting claimed and disclaimed orientations. Moreover, he is clearly drawing a distinction between morality and law, and implying that the legality or not of the war is more important than moral evaluation of Hussein.

It is fair to say that Weston is the sort of person whose contributions were highly valued in the debate – as a former soldier his opposition to war can be portrayed as somewhat unexpected, serving to problematise simplistic understandings of the polarisations involved in establishing who is on which side.

In pursuing an increased level of complexity, claiming the absence of an incompatibility between the two parts of a disclaimer is central. For example, from Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy:

We all accept the world would be safer without Saddam’s baleful dictatorship. But I see no contradiction between abhorrence of his leadership and the profound anxiety many in this country feel about the way in which the Americans – with Tony Blair’s support – propose to launch an invasion.

*(The Observer, 26/1/03: 18).*

The most important part of the ‘ontological gerrymandering’ here, the most strategically important thing that needs to be recognised as being the case, is that there is ‘no contradiction’, no incompatibility between these two different observations or evaluations, i.e., you can oppose war on other grounds than the moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein, and it is *not* necessary to rehabilitate him.

It is important to realise that the negative talk about Saddam Hussein in which those against war engaged as part of their disclaiming, put them in partial agreement with their opponents. However, while the badness of Saddam Hussein is a matter of almost universal consensus, the *relevance* of his badness is certainly not. It may be the complexity of this claimed irrelevance, with simultaneous

contempt for Saddam, is the major impediment to mutual understanding. The 'contortions' required by those attempting to articulate such complexity can, to their opponents, seem disingenuous.

In pursuit of a position of 'safety' with respect to the accusation of being an apologist for or friend of Saddam Hussein, some contributors again made use of others apparently on the same 'side' as them as a kind of contrastive foil, as they did on the issue of anti-Americanism. For example, in criticising the content of a television appearance made by Tony Blair, an Editorial in *The Guardian* newspaper observed that:

To say that opponents of the war believed that 'Saddam was a reasonably benign influence' is an unworthy insinuation [...] There may be a small minority of people who opposed the war who are apologists for Saddam. Some of them may also think that we do not need to worry about terrorism. None of this, though, applies to the overwhelming majority of opponents of the Iraq war, and certainly does not apply in any way to this newspaper

*(The Guardian, 29/9/03: 19).*

It is the possibility of identifying some 'small minority' of apologists that allows others to portray themselves as more reasonable in contrast. Arguably, it is difficult to see how making use of others, and amplifying their deviance and further marginalising them is more worthy than Blair's 'insinuation' which is criticised, since it relies upon the application of similar morally asymmetrical distinctions, in this case a distinction between a legitimate and illegitimate basis for resisting a drive to war.

It is interesting to note that the folding involved does not necessarily stop with the disclaiming of problematic identities. Although much more rare, there are various examples of people identifying disclaiming itself as illegitimate. For example, Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Mackie of Benshie said:

One cannot ignore history. People say, 'I know he's a bad man, but-', but they must take account of that. Firmness might well have led Saddam to

accept the Saudi offer of shelter. I am afraid that the marches which took place world-wide and the attitudes of a number of politicians of vision have strengthened his resolve to hang on [...]

I do not want a war, but firm opposition to this evil man, situated in a very dangerous position, will do more to avert a war than anything else.

(Hansard, 2003b: 348).

This is similar to the reflexive logic of Lord Alli [Labour] about the denial of homophobia in the context of the proposed repeal of Section 28:

I say to my friends and colleagues that to begin a speech with kind words such as ‘I am not prejudiced’, or, ‘I accept the rights of gay people but’, or, ‘I will do anything to stop the bullying of gay young men and women’, and then to oppose the repeal of section 28, cannot remove the responsibility for the legacy of hate.

(Hansard, 2000: 425-6; also see Burridge, 2004).

Disclaiming is itself implicitly portrayed as illegitimate in both of these contributions, and Lord Mackie’s statement also appropriates the logic of some other more obviously pro-war arguments in arguing that the best course of action if you want to avoid war, is actually to act as if you want one!

It is important to recognise that access to successful disclaiming is not equally distributed – there are different degrees of difficulty involved depending on a variety of factors, but particularly including the question of how your actions and communications have been previously understood, i.e., what I have already called a ‘communicative career’. In the context of Iraq, and on the question of attitudes to Saddam Hussein, there were particular individuals around whom accusations circulated consistently, despite repeated denials, or clarification, of their position. Below I discuss some of the difficulties encountered by two such individuals – George Galloway and Scott Ritter – and consider some of the reasons for the problems each faced.

### **7.3. George Galloway**

One of the people about whom the ‘pro-Saddam’ accusation has most often been made is the former Labour MP George Galloway. Although he is not the only person affected by this process, in the discourse of those in favour of war, he quite closely approximates the ‘ideal type’ (in Weber’s sense) of the pro-Saddam apologist. He was eventually thrown out of the Labour Party over his position on the war, specifically over statements which were interpreted as suggesting that British soldiers should disobey their orders.

Galloway has a very longstanding record (communicative career) of criticising the US/UK policy towards Iraq, particularly their approach to the UN sanctions regime, and has been so vocal as to have acquired the nickname ‘the honourable member for Baghdad Central’ well in advance of the build-up to invasion in late 2002 and early 2003.

More than a year in advance of the military action, in a debate at Westminster Hall, there was a very high profile accusation made by Ben Bradshaw [Labour] about Galloway’s relationship with Saddam Hussein. Bradshaw said:

Some of the good points that he [Galloway] made on the middle east peace process would, I believe, carry more credibility if he had not made a career of being not just an apologist, but a mouthpiece, for the Iraqi regime over many years

(Hansard, 2002a: 88WH).

Galloway replied by calling him a ‘liar’, which constitutes ‘unparliamentary language’ in the UK Parliament, and both were subsequently made to publicly apologise for the exchange.

In addition to the accusation Bradshaw made, and its reference to the issue of credibility, his contribution is particularly interesting because it draws another distinction – between an ‘apologist’, which is obviously illegitimate, and a ‘mouthpiece’, which is even worse. He



implies that Galloway does not simply apologise for Saddam Hussein, but actually speaks *on Hussein's behalf*.

Galloway faced constant contempt from a variety of sources in the build-up to the war, particularly from *The Sun* newspaper which variously described him as 'the voice of Saddam' (Trevor Kavanagh, *The Sun*, 27/2/03: 2), again implying that he spoke *for* Saddam Hussein directly, 'treacherous' and a 'slimy Saddam supporter' (Trevor Kavanagh, *The Sun*, 1/4/03: 9) as well as a 'lickspittle lackey of dictators' (The Sun Says, *The Sun*, 1/4/03: 8).

Commenting upon Galloway's second trip to Iraq in September 2002, Stephen Pollard wrote that:

his mission in life: to show us that Saddam is human [...]

George Galloway stands in a long and dishonourable line of willing dupes. Similar fools have told us that Hitler had a lovely smile, Milosevic supported his local football team and Mengistu adored his children. So what? They were dangerous, evil men, however comforting the quality of their handshake.

(*The Times*, 18/9/02: 20).

More specific, and more sinister, allegations were forthcoming once the invasion was underway, based upon documents allegedly found in the looted office of Iraq's foreign minister by a reporter working for *The Daily Telegraph* (David Blair, 22/4/03: 1; 23/4/03: 1; 24/4/03: 1) which suggested that Galloway was receiving payments from Iraq and had been profiting from illegal oil sales in violation of the UN's oil-for-food programme. Galloway described the accusations as 'black propaganda', and launched libel actions against the paper. He eventually received £150,000 in compensation after a successful libel action against the *Telegraph* in December 2004, and earlier received £50,000 damages from the Boston-based *Christian Science Monitor* after it made similar accusations (Jamie Wilson, *The Guardian*, 20/3/04: 5).

Galloway was also under a microscope when it emerged that his name was on a list, presented to a sub-committee of the US

Congress, of individuals and organisations suspected of oil-related deals during the sanctions regime (David Rennie, *The Daily Telegraph*, 22/4/04: 4; Trevor Kavanagh, *The Sun*, 23/4/04: 9).

Galloway's response to these accusations was as follows:

I was not the only one on their list: one of the Pope's secretaries, the former French interior minister Charles Pasqua (the country's most astringent mainstream critics of the US), a string of top UN officials, Indonesia's president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, Vladimir Putin, Russia's Communist party and the ANC – a kind of 'axis of evil' of opponents of sanctions and the war – are all miraculously named in documents saved from the flames as swimming in oil at the expense of starving children.

(*The Guardian*, 24/4/04: 22).

The 'convenience' of these allegations is utilised by Galloway to render them suspicious, and this 'well they would say that about me' logic permeates much of his resistance to the way he has been understood. The other main technique was to point to his 'anti-Saddam record' (Galloway, 2004: 47), and his history of campaigning against Saddam Hussein, and like other contributions, also attempting to invoke the inconsistency of his opponents:

I was pleased to be able to say, while under attack as an apologist for Saddam Hussein, that I used to be outside the Iraqi embassy in London demonstrating for democracy and human rights while British businessmen and ministers were inside selling guns and gas.

(Galloway, 2004: 39).

Unfortunately for Galloway, there existed many apparent tensions between the types of evidence available for assessing his position. The often-repeated video footage of him in Saddam Hussein's presence in 1994, apparently saluting his 'indefatigability', arguably undid any credibility he may have accrued for twenty odd years of campaign work. As with Tony Benn's arguably ill-advised interview with Hussein shortly before the invasion began, the availability within his communicative career of the appearance of him taking Saddam

Hussein seriously is unlikely to make him any more persuasive a contributor. It is arguably the case that, in some ways, he acted in such a way as to appear to be exactly who his opponents said he was, thereby confirming his illegitimacy in their eyes.

#### 7.4. *Scott Ritter*

When Mr Ritter appears on television, he is now routinely asked whether he considers himself a traitor [...] He has been described as 'misguided', 'disloyal', and as 'an apologist for and defender of Saddam Hussein'. Some commentators have compared Mr Ritter's defiant defence of Iraq to the propaganda broadcasts for Japan famously made by American citizen Iva Ikuko Toguri during the Second World War. Mr Ritter himself prefers the example of Daniel Ellsberg, the defence department official who leaked Pentagon papers during the Vietnam War, in an attempt to discredit the military campaign.

(Julian Coman, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 15/9/02: 29).

The case of former UNSCOM weapons inspector Scott Ritter is slightly different, given that he has been widely observed as changing his position on Iraq and its alleged WMD.

As a result of his opposition to the Bush administration's policies, Ritter experienced a 'smear campaign', including allegations of child endangerment (David Teather, *The Guardian*, 24/1/03: 4), and also attracted accusations of treachery. In common with Galloway, he was accused of giving Iraq a 'propaganda coup' when he spoke to the Iraqi parliament on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2002 (Michael Theodoulou, *The Times*, 9/9/02: 11). This was significantly different from the propaganda coup he had previously given the Iraqi regime when, as 'the UN weapons inspector most detested by Baghdad' (Cockburn and Cockburn, 2002: xxvii), he was portrayed as the 'ugly American' because of his confrontational style (Butler, 2000: 198).

Ritter's situation illustrates the ambivalent status of the 'convert' within controversy. To the group joined, the change is

welcome, and can be utilised as evidence of the persuasiveness of their case – someone’s mind has been changed by their arguments (see Hofstadter, 1996: 35). The relative strength with which such an individual can be shown to have held their previous view can then be used to indicate how powerful those arguments are. In Ritter’s case, his position on the 2003 invasion can be portrayed as a significant change, and because of his previously observed hawkish and confrontational position.

When a ‘conversion’ takes place and someone leaves one side in a controversy, charges of treachery are often made by the ‘side’ losing their former ‘member’. Or, in less directly moral terms, the convert can be accused of inconsistency, or their motivation for changing position impugned.

One way of attempting to resist such accusations of inconsistency is to deny that any radical change has actually taken place. Ritter himself often claimed that he had been consistent in his approach (David Rose, *The Observer*, 15/9/02: 19), and others have taken his side on this issue:

Some in the media have portrayed Ritter, a tough-guy U.S. marine, as a crank – apparently because he ‘switched sides’ and became an outspoken critic of the Bush propaganda campaign on Iraq. In fact, a close reading of his books shows Ritter’s position had not flipped, but rather had evolved.

(Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, 2003: 75).

On this account, Ritter is *not* a convert – that is too dramatic a description. His position has ‘evolved’, implying that it has not been a discontinuous process, but a relatively slow, ‘reasonable’, ‘rational’, one.

Ritter also raises some other questions about the notion of speaking in ‘difficult’ circumstances, where dissent may be unwelcome, and one way of thinking about this issue is Foucault’s (2001: 11) discussion of the ancient Greek notions of ‘parrhesia’, usually translated as ‘free speech’, and the parrhesiastes – the ‘one

who speaks the truth'. This highly valued role consists of having the courage to say the things that a leader does not necessarily want to hear, and involves the speaker confronting a significant risk in speaking. The 'truth' that is told has a strong moral quality, and a relationship to duty, derived from the risk involved and the courage therefore required. According to Foucault (2001: 15): 'The fact that a speaker says something dangerous – different from what the majority believes – is a strong indication that he is a parrhesiastes' (also see O'Leary, 2002: 148).

I do not contend that the label accurately describes Ritter, and Foucault (2001: 83) points out that the elitism involved in the notion of parrhesia precludes its existence in a democracy (which is how the UK and US are usually classified). It could be argued that democracies are at their least democratic in a war-related situation, so it may be that the notion of parrhesia is nevertheless relevant. Regardless, there is something about the way in which Ritter and others have described his contributions, which connects with the courageous heroism and sacrifice implied by the notion of parrhesia, as well as an appeal to freedom of speech (and therefore the US Constitution's First Amendment).

Below are two quotations from a book in which he was involved:

I feel that what I bring to the table is absolutely essential to this debate. That's why I speak out – to bring insights to bear which might not otherwise be heard. Rather than being a traitor, I think that my speaking out is the most patriotic thing I can do right now. The biggest service I can do for my country is to facilitate a wider debate and dialogue on the direction regarding Iraq [...]

My speaking out has everything to do with empowering democracy, and absolutely nothing to do with treason or betraying my country

(Scott Ritter in Rivers Pitt, 2002: 70-1).

Mr Ritter is a patriot, a man with an astounding record of service to his country. He is a card-carrying Republican who voted for Bush in the 2000 election. Far more than any of the men who now push for the war on Iraq

in Washington D.C., Mr Ritter is a man who has seen the situation firsthand.

(Rivers Pitt, 2002: 8).

These extracts combine an appeal to courage and risk, with a stress also placed upon displaying patriotism. Moreover, there is an appeal to the unexpected – Ritter is a ‘card-carrying Republican’ (also see – Scott Ritter, *The Guardian*, 7/10/02: 17). If such a person is against war, he must surely have good reasons. The discursive strategy implies that because he is going against what would be expected given his preceding communicative career, and because he is displaying courage by speaking despite attendant risks, his position now is to be taken more seriously.

### ***7.5. The Irrelevance of Morality?***

Throughout the build-up to the invasion of Iraq, and in the months since, the disclaiming of those against war with regard to a positive orientation towards Saddam Hussein has constituted a partial agreement with their opponents in terms of the moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein. Although there is a ‘but’ following their own condemnation of him, they were still engaging in the debate on the grounds of morality – morality is made relevant even if only temporarily, until the ‘but’ is said.

Since the badness of Saddam Hussein was an important component in the justifications used as part of their opponent’s arguments for war, there is a risk of those against war seeming to partially accept aspects of their opponents’ case for it. However, their claims questioning the *relevance* of the moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein – their disputation that it should be central – creates the risk of their position being dismissed as overly complex sophistry.

Although the relevance of Saddam Hussein’s badness appears to be the location of the conflict, it is the attempt at breaking away from a widespread consensus about this that creates some of the problems faced by those against war – if you accept the badness of

Saddam then how can you be defending him? It must be that you are only saying so to avoid condemnation for it. Things come full circle when, because of this, people have to stress his evil even more strongly.

The widespread negative description of Saddam Hussein is strongly related to another important theme within the whole debate – the alleged connections of the pre-war situation with World War Two, including the restatement of a theme from 1990-1 – that the badness of Saddam Hussein was sufficient to make him ‘another Hitler’.

## 8. *Appeasement and Historical Analogies*

There are glib and sometimes foolish comparisons with the 1930s. I am not suggesting for a moment that anyone here is an appeaser or does not share our revulsion at the regime of Saddam. However, there is one relevant point of analogy. It is that, with history, we know what happened. We can look back and say, 'There's the time; that was the moment; that's when we should have acted.' However, the point is that it was not clear at the time – not at that moment. In fact, at that time, many people thought such a fear fanciful, or worse, that it was put forward in bad faith by warmongers.

(Tony Blair, Hansard, 2003d: 767).

Another prominent accusation directed at those arguing against war was that they wanted to engage in 'appeasement', something which is clearly negative in our 'moral vocabulary' (Walzer, 2000: 68), and connects to another recurrent theme in the public debate – the invocation of analogies with previous wars.

Foster (1999: 25) notes how historical and cultural narratives from World War Two (henceforth WWII) in particular have often been appropriated in the telling of subsequent wars because: 'the past exists as an accomplished presence in public understanding'. My concern is not with evaluating the 'accuracy' of the analogies drawn, but more with the connective possibilities they open up – what valuations and connections they make possible, as well as the particular problems created for some contributors.

According to many arguments in favour of war, the Iraq 'crisis' was to be understood as analogous to Europe in the 1930s – it was WWII again. As I noted in the review of literature, as in the 1991 conflict, Saddam Hussein was cast as Adolf Hitler, and those arguing against war were equivalent to those advocating appeasement of Hitler's expansionist agenda. Rarely, Saddam Hussein was even implied to be worse than Hitler. In his biography of the former Iraqi President, Coughlin (2002: 211) wrote of the Nazi's development of the



chemical nerve agent Tabun, also possessed and used by Iraq: 'Although Tabun had been developed by the Nazis, Hitler himself had refrained from using it on the battlefield. Saddam, clearly, had no such qualms.' In addition to this portrayal of Hussein as Hitler, Tony Blair and George W. Bush (controversially) were occasionally cast in the role of Churchill.

Just as the cultural expansion of the Holocaust as an evil event has allowed its moral criteria to be applied in other less specific ways (Alexander, 2002), the same can be said for WWII and various concepts and personnel associated with it. Given contemporary understandings of the way that historical events unfolded, the persuasive force of the analogy is located in a series of asserted equivalences: Saddam = Hitler = evil; opponent of war = appeaser = wrong in the 1930s = wrong now (and, importantly, should know better). Such logic made it possible for supporters of war to claim that:

the refusal of key European countries to stand up to the threat of Saddam Hussein in 2003 showed that it was still capable of failing the test that it flunked in 1936, when it should have threatened force.

(Shawcross, 2004: 75).

Not only has appeasement failed in the past, it is also argued to be systematically misguided and self-defeating (Kirkpatrick, 1984: 19-20) since it merely delays the inevitable, ultimately leading to a more difficult conflict as with Hitler (Record, 2002: 137, 147). As Richard Perle, former Chairman of the US Defense Policy Board, put it in relation to Iraq: 'A pre-emptive strike against Hitler at the time of Munich would have meant an immediate war, as opposed to the one that came later. Later was much worse' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 9/8/02: 22).

In fairness, it should be noted that a few arguments in favour of war discursively appropriating the 1930s nevertheless denied that this meant Hussein was Hitler and that those against war were appeasers –

for example, Pollack's (2002: xv-xvi, 423) impassioned but relatively thoughtful contribution

In general, Hitler analogies are often contested both on the grounds of their validity, and the motivation for them having been made. The case against them is summed up by philosopher Peter Singer who asserts that the logic of many of the pro-war arguments was 'remember Munich, not Vietnam', claiming that:

the comparison between Hitler and Saddam Hussein in 2003 is misleading, in various ways. First, Hitler was the leader of a major world power; Saddam was not. (Iraq was much weaker in 2003 than it had been when it invaded Kuwait in 1991, for sanctions and forced disarmament had prevented it from replacing much of the military equipment it lost during the Gulf War, or modernizing its armed forces.) Second, Hitler was on an expansionist path; since 1991, Saddam had been constrained to such an extent that he was unable to control even those areas of his own state in which Kurds had effectively established an autonomous region. Third, at Munich, Hitler made claims to part of the territory of an independent state, Czechoslovakia, which strenuously resisted those claims. Britain and France should have stood by Czechoslovakia, and, if Hitler had invaded it, declared war on Germany. That obviously, would have been in full compliance with international law. The situation in 1991, when Saddam invaded Kuwait, had certain parallels to Hitler's claims on Czechoslovakia, but by 2003 there was no parallel at all.

(Singer, 2004: 19).

Despite such denials, there are many examples of connections made between Iraq and the WWII in discourse through the build-up to war. One example, which is often not recognised as such, is the infamous phrase 'the Axis of Evil' (originally axis of hatred in an earlier draft – see Frum, 2003: 238; Woodward, 2004: 86-7) deployed by George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address – a phrase evoking the 'axis powers' Germany, Italy and Japan (Woodward, 2004: 92), implying that a sinister relationship existed between the named countries – Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

In the public debate there were many other contributions appropriating aspects of history in various ways, as well as contesting such appropriations. There are also examples of analogies unable to attain the level of success of WWII. I will go on to briefly discuss two of these after dealing in greater detail with the question of appeasement and WWII.

### **8.1. *Accusations of Appeasement***

There are many examples of people invoking ‘appeasement’ and accusing their opponents of pursuing it. As early as January 2002 it was claimed that: ‘The ghost of appeasement in the 1930s looms over the present confrontation with Saddam’ (Editorial, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 22/1/02: 14). Asserting that a ghost ‘looms’ is not the same as accusing people of engaging in appeasement, but if we assume that it should have ‘remained dead’ then it is clear that its ghostly presence is not welcomed.

Many of the accusations proceed in this rather nebulous manner – vague statements about appeasement’s presence, without clarity about who is accused, or how appeasement is defined.

Speaking directly in relation to the section of Tony Blair’s eve of war speech reproduced at the start of this chapter, former leader of the Conservative Party, William Hague made use of such vagueness: ‘The Prime Minister said that analogies with the 30s can be taken too far, and of course they can, yet in some of the opposition to the Government’s stance there is a hint of appeasement’ (Hansard, 2003d: 791). Hague starts by agreeing with Blair regarding the way in which analogies can be ‘taken too far’, but then uses the contrastive conjunction ‘yet’ to deviate from Blair’s argument and claim the presence of a ‘hint’ of appeasement. Again it is not specified who is ‘guilty’ of engaging in it.

An example of more direct accusation, although again not identifying particular individuals, which also invokes ‘appeasement’, comes from Julian Lewis [Conservative]:

It must be said that many of the very same people who are arguing against action now were arguing against it then. Those who said, in advance of the action that was eventually taken against the Hitlerite regime, that no action was justified get a bad press, because they are now regarded as having no reasonable arguments. Let me assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if we could revisit the debates that took place in this House in the 1930s, we would hear arguments for appeasement just as sophisticated as those put forward today. Those arguments were wrong then, and they are wrong now. It will be a grave mistake if people think that the cause of peace is served by always avoiding conflict. Sometimes the only way to bring peace is to face up to the need for conflict, and this is one of those occasions.

(Hansard, 2003a: 333).

Many arguments against war are portrayed as having been heard before – in the 1930s. Indeed, not only are the arguments the same, so too are the types of people making them. For Lewis, these people are unreasonable and their arguments wrong, since they are equivalent to those made against war with Hitler, the makers of which are now regarded as ‘having no reasonable arguments’. At the end of this extract, Lewis includes a rather Orwellian-sounding ‘to get peace we sometimes need to go to war’ argument.

Although direct reference to specific individuals as appeasers was relatively rare, there were examples observing the ‘types’ of people likely to engage in it – ‘the very same’ types implied but not named by Lewis:

Appeasement is certainly in the air and has taken possession of a large number of British opinion makers – perhaps a third of the Labour Party, all the Anglican bishops and even some generals and diplomats.

(John Keegan, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28/1/03: 20).

Whilst I am not explicitly interested in furnishing definitions myself, it seems fair to consider the question of what counts as appeasement. By looking at the processes of accusation, its defining qualities are

unclear. As I have already stated, such accusations tend to proceed rather vaguely. Suffice to say, the analogy with the 1930s is used in an attempt to delegitimize the arguments made against war.

There are contributions to the public debate describing specific activities as constituting appeasement, although many of these are fairly extreme. For example, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region in Sulaymaniyah, Barham Salih wrote that: 'Inspections are a form of appeasement' (*The Observer*, 16/3/03: 19). If we assume the WWII analogy, then this equates the UN process – the so-called 'UN route' – with appeasement.

Earlier on in the process, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly (12/9/02) George W. Bush actually challenged the UN to ensure that it did not suffer the same fate as its predecessor, the League of Nations: 'We created the United Nations Security Council, so that, unlike the League of Nations, our deliberations would be more than talk, our resolutions would be more than wishes' (Bush, 2002a). The importance of this challenge was taken up by those positively disposed to war against Iraq (for example, Trevor Kavanagh, *The Sun*, 13/9/02: 9), and the perceived unwillingness of the UN to act strongly connected to the failure of League of Nations and a parallel with WWII and appeasement drawn yet again.

Another example comes from the Reverend Ian Paisley [Democratic Unionist Party], who made the following claims:

Diplomacy cannot stop a tyrant. We can try to buy off terrorists, but they will not be bought off. As Churchill said, if we appease them they will come back for more: it only feeds their appetite [...]

I am sad at heart that in Northern Ireland we have reaped the dark harvest of attempting to appease terrorism.

(Hansard, 2003d: 861-2).

Given his own place in the context of Northern Ireland, which he invokes, he has specific concerns regarding the issues of terrorism and diplomacy. The implication of the first sentence, is that all diplomacy constitutes appeasement when dealing with a 'tyrant', and the extreme

'badness' of Saddam Hussein therefore means that diplomacy is automatically self-defeating.

A more fruitful location to probe the forms of evidence taken to constitute a problematic identity (in this case the 'appeaser', in favour of appeasement), may be via those contributions denying that the accusation applies to them.

## **8.2. *Problematization and 'Buts'***

A variety of disclaimers are utilised to resist accusations of 'appeasement', and other interventions made aiming to influence its definition. For example, Michael Brown, tried to establish a distinction between 'appeasement' and the 'negotiation' involved in all diplomacy:

Above all, negotiation is not appeasement. Appeasement involves a sacrifice of a moral principle in order to avert aggression. Negotiation requires some change of the status quo in order to make progress without giving up a point of basic principle. This is the very stuff of diplomacy and, throughout history, negotiation has been the only peaceful way of resolving serious differences between nations.

*(The Independent, 7/8/02: 13).*

Rather than denying that the accusation applies to him, Brown denies that the phenomena called 'appeasement' and 'negotiation' are equivalent in general. He provides definitions emphasising the difference, which he takes to be whether or not 'principle' is compromised. According to such a definition, the UN process should be observed as 'negotiation' rather than 'appeasement', as a long-standing routine practice rather than as sinister and illegitimate. Clearly if the distinction can be sustained this would be what Luhmann, after Bateson (2000: 459), would call 'a difference that makes a difference'.

In his examination of the historical significance of the policy of appeasement, Robbins (1997) discusses the way in which, during the 1930s, appeasement was to be understood as distinct from pacifism,

and that explicit advocates of either position disliked being associated with one another. According to Robbins, appeasement was viewed as more overtly political, but as less based upon consistent and sustained principle – it was more a pragmatic response to a specific set of circumstances than a theoretically expounded ‘ideology’ (Robbins, 1997: 26). It may be that some of the antipathy that the alleged presence of appeasement attracts is based upon an understanding of appeasement that continues to assume this absence of principle. Although not made directly in contrast to pacifism, Brown’s definition of appeasement is certainly consistent with its negative valuation as unprincipled.

Other more straightforward denials state that the accusation of appeasement and the analogy with the 1930s is wrong in terms of its application rather than its definition. For example: ‘I am disappointed when the spectre of appeasement is raised [...] The situations of Iraq in 2002 and Germany in the 1930s are totally different’ (Richard Allan [Liberal Democrat], Hansard, 2002b: 134). The differences between the contexts, which unlike in Singer’s earlier denial are not specified, are supposed to render the analogy inoperable.

Another contribution problematising the applicability of appeasement, comes from Lord Morgan:

As a historian, I worry about the crude use of history, particularly our old friend the 1930s. Time and again we hear that this crisis is the 1930s come again – what nonsense. Saddam is not another Hitler. Where is his *Mein Kampf*? Where is his dream of universal conquest? George Bush is certainly no Churchill; it would be a calumny on the reputation of that great man to suggest it. It is a facile argument, and it disturbs me that Downing Street produces it, all the more because I taught one or two of them. My efforts were clearly somewhat in vain.

(Hansard, 2003b: 332).

Not only is Saddam not another Hitler, but Lord Morgan also denies the validity of comparing George W. Bush to Churchill. He asserts his authority to speak on this by mentioning that he is a historian, which

supposedly qualifies him to adjudicate the validity of the appeasement analogy, which he characterises as ‘crude’. Based upon the incompatibilities Lord Morgan mentions we can assume that he believes that too many of the important elements from the source domain of the metaphor do not connect up with elements in its destination – if Saddam is not Hitler, and Bush is not Churchill, then the analogy does not fit successfully.

Speaking in the final House of Commons debate before the British troops were deployed, Peter Kilfoyle [Labour] argued for another incompatibility, relating directly to the presence of the weapons inspectors:

[T]he Prime Minister made much of events back in 1938. Of course, he said that he was not suggesting that anyone was an appeaser. The only person who I have ever appeased in my life is Mrs. Kilfoyle – not very successfully, I hasten to add. The thing that struck me, of course, was that I do not recall that the League of Nations had inspectors in Germany dismantling the panzers in 1938, as we have inspectors dismantling the weapons in Iraq today.

(Hansard, 2003d: 780).

Kilfoyle makes a ‘joke’ about his unsuccessful appeasement of his wife, ironising the moral seriousness of the concept. He states that the presence of the UN weapons inspectors is the key difference, making reference to the 1930s and appeasement inappropriate. In a more directly dialogic context, Kilfoyle would be likely to face the counter-claim that the only reason inspectors were in Iraq, was the credible threat of force, but this does not necessarily undermine the status of Kilfoyle’s argument as another way of problematising the analogy with the appeasement.

Given their composition in terms of age, it was possible for many members of the House of Lords to draw upon personal experiences of WWII in formulating their arguments. Baroness Turner of Camden drew upon her experiences in arguing for the



inappropriateness of the 1930s appeasement analogy in successive parliamentary debates:

Those of us who oppose war are often derided as appeasers – or else are told that we are anti-American. I know that there are many Americans who share our feelings against war. It takes some time for them to get organised and to make their views known. But they will do so and they are already being joined by a number of prominent United States citizens.

As to the charge of appeasement, that makes me very angry. I am old enough to remember the Second World War. I know what it is like to huddle in an air-raid shelter and hear the scream of the bombs as they come down [...] The generation who challenged Hitler's regime – and Saddam Hussein is no Hitler – knew very well what had to be faced. Today's armchair worriers face no such threat. They will watch the war on television while others pay the price.

(Hansard, 2003b: 347).

I do not believe that those in this country who are in favour of war fully understand the revulsion that many of us feel of the reasons for it. We are accused of supporting Saddam Hussein, or else of appeasement, as if a minor dictator of a broken, battered country that has been reduced to third-world level can somehow be compared with Hitler! Those who make such comments are too young to have experienced those days or else know no history.

(Hansard, 2003e: 211).

In both extracts, she strongly refuses the equation of Hussein with Hitler. The first denies outright their equation, and the second provides reasons for this – Saddam Hussein's minor status, and Iraq's reduction in terms of economic and technological development, due to the UN sanctions, distinguishing it from 1930s Germany. She accompanies this with a denial of anti-Americanism and the accusation that her position equates with being 'pro-Saddam', issues which I have already discussed. She accuses those making the appeasement accusation of having deficiencies in historical knowledge – they are 'too young' or 'know no history', and she positions herself in the role

of primary source, bearing firsthand witness to assist her claims to validity.

Some other contributions moved beyond denying the relevance, or applicability of the invocation of appeasement, and imputed illegitimate motives to that invocation – making sense of why the process of accusation occurred. Rowan Williams, now the Archbishop of Canterbury, claimed that talk of appeasement was ‘facile point-scoring’ (Rowan Williams, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5/11/02: 22), and Peter Hennessey wrote:

[W]hen you want to do something and need instant justification with brand recognition, you invoke Munich. Eden also invoked Munich at Suez, he said Nasser was Mussolini. It’s not good enough; it just doesn’t work; it’s not on. It’s lazy thinking.

(*The Guardian*, 29/8/02: 3).

According to this, the metonymic significance of Munich with regard to appeasement has ‘brand recognition’. Interestingly, Hennessey also notes the way that it was used previously in the Suez crisis, and implies its use is generally illegitimate. Again we have the implication that it is based upon misunderstanding, or a ‘lazy’ interpretation of history.

Another contribution diagnosing the reasons for the Hitler analogy’s application characterises its usage in a manner similar to the processes I am describing:

[There is a] powerful reason why both London and Washington have had recourse to parallels between the present conflict and the second world war. Doing so has served to delegitimise dissent. Since appeasing Hitler in the 1930s proved futile and prolonged his aggression and genocide, the clear implication – which pro-war politicians and pundits have often made explicit in fact – is that now to criticise war against President Saddam, another monster, constitutes at best crass naivety, and at worse complicity in dictatorship, terror and slaughter.

(Linda Colley, *The Guardian: G2*, 7/4/03: 5).

Here, the delegitimizing implications of accusing your opponents of ‘appeasement’ are recognised, and the logic behind appeasement’s negativity described – its ‘failure’ in the past. The question that perhaps remains is: is it enough to identify or recognise such a process in order to undermine it? Is articulating what your opponent is ‘doing’ with their argument – their attempts to position you – sufficient to undermine what they are doing? I would suspect not. This specific example is actually similar to my approach in that she is not assessing the truth or falsity of the analogy. However, since truth/falsity is one of the most recurrent ways in which public statements are observed, it would seem unlikely that an argument such as Colley’s would have much persuasive effect upon her opponents because they would be likely to assert that the analogy was accurate or true – something which is not necessarily the point. If the debate tends to revolve around the truth/falsity of a given analogy, then inside the debate, recognition of what the analogy does would seem unlikely to result in a successful reorientation of the whole debate.

### **8.3. *Reversing the Accusation***

Another set of practices observable in resistance to accusations of appeasement involve going further than disclaiming or trying to undermine the analogy with the 1930s as illegitimate. Instead they assert the relevance of appeasement but as part of arguments *against* war.

One example stands on its own by arguing that appeasement has actually been successful in the past:

I am against appeasement in general, but I do not believe that invoking the examples of the 1930s is always helpful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sometimes, I remind noble Lords, appeasement has worked. We appeased the Soviet Union, for example, for 40 years between 1945 and 1990 and in the end we won the Cold War.

(Lord Thomas of Swynnerton [Crossbench], Hansard, 2002e: 919).

This claims the relevance of appeasement, but attempts to problematise its negativity by identifying a significant context in which it was pursued successfully.

This approach would seem a rather unlikely candidate for success because of the sense in which it is challenging a whole set of widespread associations in which appeasement is negatively valued by people on both sides of the debate. In the materials I have analysed I have not encountered any similar examples, whatsoever.

A far more common approach making use of the relevance of appeasement was to accept its relevance, but to argue that it was not being applied to the correct people – reversing the direction of the accusation. It is claimed that those commonly making the accusations are the ones engaged in appeasement. This is pursued in a variety of ways, and I discuss several specific examples below. It is noticeable that all these examples come from the three daily national newspapers consistently against the war.

Commenting upon George Bush and Tony Blair's positions, and the invocation of 'appeasement' Robert Fiske wrote that:

Obsessed with their own demonisation of Saddam Hussein, both are now reminding us of the price of appeasement. Bush thinks he is the Churchill of America, refusing the appeasement of Saddam [...]

One of the principal nations which 'did nothing about Hitler' was the US.

*(The Independent, 27/1/03: 5).*

Here the US's late entry into WWII due to its policy of neutrality before 'Pearl Harbor' is mobilised in order to problematise parallels with WWII, and Fiske is arguably also skirting around accusing the US of 'hypocrisy'.

Other contributions accused the British government, or Tony Blair in particular, of engaging in appeasement with their orientations towards US policy:

The distorting mirror of Munich and appeasement is held up with irritating regularity [...] Jack Straw warns that Washington would abandon the UN

and NATO if Europe refuses to fall into line: 'What I say to France and Germany and all my other EU colleagues is take care, because just as America helps to define and influence our politics, so what we do in Europe helps to define and influence American politics ... And we will reap a whirlwind if we push the Americans into a unilateralist position in which they are the centre of this unipolar world.' If that is not appeasement, I'd like to know what you call it.

(Richard Dawkins, *The Guardian*, 6/3/03: 27).

Dawkins notes the metonymic significance of Munich, and its place in accusations of appeasement, claiming that they are 'irritating' distortions. He utilises a statement made by Jack Straw, regarding the relationship between Europe and the United States – that a certain non-confrontational approach should be adopted so that the EU does not 'reap a whirlwind' of US unilateralism – and argues that this constitutes appeasement of the US.

Another example comes from Seumas Milne:

The split at the heart of Nato over George Bush's plans to invade Iraq has triggered an outpouring of charges of 1930s-style appeasement against those resisting the rush to war. [...] Hitler analogies have long been the stock-in-trade of Anglo-American war propaganda – perhaps not surprisingly, since the second world war still retains near-universal legitimacy [...] The parallel between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Nazi Germany is transparently ridiculous [...] The idea that those opposed to US aggression against Iraq can be compared to the appeasers of the 1930s is simply risible. But if appeasement – unlike the form it took in the 1930s – is regarded as an attempt to pacify a powerful and potentially dangerous power, it sounds far more like the behaviour of Tony Blair's government towards the Bush administration.

(*The Guardian*, 13/2/03: 22).

Milne identifies one of the main issues which underpins talk about WWII – its 'near-universal legitimacy' as a justified ('just') war that was necessary in order to defeat Nazism. He claims that arguments invoking Hitler have been regularly made when the US or Britain have been advocating war, but in stark contrast to the contribution from

Linda Colley in the previous section, he is clearly operating according to the truth/falsity of the analogy with the 1930s – it is ‘transparently ridiculous’ and ‘simply risible’. Having argued that those against war are not guilty of appeasing a dictator equivalent to Hitler, he makes a contrastive move to define appeasement in such a way that Tony Blair is positioned as engaging in it vis-à-vis the Bush administration. Such an approach clearly relies upon a definition of appeasement as inappropriately compliant behaviour towards a more powerful person or institution with negative consequences, albeit used in a different direction than is often the case.

Another contribution turning the notion of appeasement back upon Tony Blair comes from one of the war’s most vocal critics, John Pilger:

To call Blair a mere ‘poodle’ is to allow him distance from the killing of innocent Iraqi men, women and children for which he will share responsibility. He is the embodiment of the most dangerous appeasement humanity has known since the 1930s.

*(Daily Mirror, 29/1/03: 4; also see Pilger, 2004: 26).*

Pilger problematises the common ‘poodle’ accusation – that Tony Blair was acting like George W. Bush’s lapdog, with all the emasculating implications of the poodle as canine analogy – by claiming that it is too lenient a description, and allows Blair a greater degree of ‘distance’ from the situation than he allegedly deserves. Pilger prefers to accuse Blair of appeasement, indeed, with characteristic shrillness, the ‘most dangerous appeasement humanity has known since the 1930s’. Again the 1930s are invoked, but the accusation is directed at those in favour of war on Iraq.

Similar logic was at work after the Madrid bombings and Spanish elections in early 2004 as Matthew Parris objected to the accusations of appeasement directed at the Spanish electorate for their decision to elect an anti-war government:

Appeasement worries me: appeasement in the War on Terror. I am worried about political parties becoming associated with appeasement in the voters' minds.

The appeasement I mean is not the cheap accusation with which our Prime Minister insults the Spanish electorate. I mean the appeasement of Washington. It is not too late for the British Tories, nor for the Right more widely across the Western world, to start distancing themselves from a doctrine that in Spain has just cost the most successful conservative party in Europe a general election.'

*(The Times, 20/3/04: 26).*

Writing immediately after the publication of Tony Blair's dossier on 'Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction', another longstanding critic of US foreign policy, Tariq Ali, advanced a similar, and yet significantly different characterisation of Britain and the US, again using the resonance of the Hitler analogy:

The notion that Iraq represents a threat to Britain, let alone the US is reminiscent of German propaganda prior to the Second World War.

Before he invaded a country, Hitler always insisted it posed a threat to the Third Reich.

*(Daily Mirror, 25/9/02: 6).*

Rather than being cast in the role of appeaser, Blair is himself associated with Hitler – engaging in practices 'reminiscent of' 'German propaganda'. This arguably goes one step further than the others, and does not rely directly upon the appeasement part of the analogy with the 1930s. Nevertheless, the significance of using an understanding of particular aspects of WWII is clear.

Most of these examples sustain or reaffirm the negativity of appeasement (or other aspects of WWII), by making use of some of its connotations in order to reflexively refold or reverse the process of accusation. As such, they can be argued to be contributing to the relevance of 'appeasement' as a technique for understanding orientations to war in the future, and therefore arguably assisting those likely to make the accusation at them in future contexts. Such

reversals do little to undermine the general utility of accusations of ‘appeasement’ for marginalising opposition to war (in general), since the illegitimacy of appeasement is left intact; indeed reversal is reliant upon that illegitimacy for its efficacy.

The possibility of such reversal lies in the lack of directional specificity in terms of appeasement’s meaning. If the direct link made between appeasement and Hitler can be broken, then anyone can be an appeaser or be appeased (including George W. Bush and even Mrs Kilfoyle). However, things are not quite this simple. In the section on anti-Americanism, which would seem to be more directionally specific, I also provided examples of people engaging in reversal. As with almost everything about this event, neatness and clarity remain rather elusive, and what counts as what and where is contested.

#### **8.4. *The Suez Crisis (1956)***

One historical analogy drawn directly as a distinction from the WWII, which was unable to gain WWII’s hegemonic status, is the ‘Suez crisis’ resulting from Britain’s response to Egypt’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956 (see Varble, 2003 for a summary).

In the Parliamentary debate immediately preceding commencement of military action, Peter Pike [Labour] invoked Suez to inculcate wariness about the risks of war: ‘Suez shows that some conflicts do not yield the aims that we set out with. That is why I am worried about the present situation’ (Hansard, 2003d: 890). The Suez crisis is held up as an example of war having negative unintended consequences, to bring into view the unknown consequences of the Iraq conflict to encourage a greater degree of caution.

During the earlier action against Afghanistan, other aspects of Suez were invoked and used to make sense of the events and consequences of that situation: ‘History may not be repetitious, but Suez offers some winding parallels [...] Many applauded the platitude that Nasser was Hitler returned from the grave – and that appeasing dictators never worked’ (Hywel Williams, *The Guardian*, 18/10/01:



24). Williams went on to claim that the strongest parallels lay in the alleged divisions within the cabinet over what should be done and the looming possibility of the PM's replacement – with Gordon Brown playing Harold MacMillan (Anthony Eden's replacement as Prime Minister) to Blair's Eden.

Far in advance of the beginning of military action in Iraq, Lord Thomson of Monifieth [Liberal Democrat] made the following statement:

There is always a danger that decent men draw the wrong lessons from their own historic experiences. In 1956, at the time of Suez, Anthony Eden equated Nasser with Hitler. He was rescued from a foolish war only by the government of the United States. Today, sadly, the leaders of both America and Britain appear to be falling into the same historic fallacy over Saddam Hussein.

Hussein, for all his horrors [...] is no Hitler.

(Hansard, 2003b: 267).

The implication is that the Hitler analogy has been applied in the past – at the time of Suez – with negative results. Nasser was 'equated' with Hitler leading to 'foolish' consequences. As such, the UK and US should be careful about falling into this 'historic fallacy' in relation to Saddam Hussein.

This is very similar to Robbins' (1997: 4) understanding of the episode – primarily as one in which the spectre of Hitler was invoked leading to much 'anti-appeasement rhetoric' in pursuit of justification for military action against Nasser (also see Pearson, 2003: 29, 57).

If the Iraq war had been understood more widely as analogous to this interpretation of the Suez crisis, emphasis would have been placed upon very different elements in the conflict. Instead of Saddam being Hitler, Blair would have been Eden, claiming that Saddam Hussein (as Nasser) was Hitler for what have been understood to be illegal and misguided ends (even William Rees-Mogg, who was at the time a junior assistant speechwriter to Anthony Eden, admits that the whole policy on Suez was based upon a lie regarding the existence of a

secret treaty between Britain, France and Israel – see *The Times*, 2/2/04: 16), and this would have been expected to result in Blair losing office. The different resonance of the Suez crisis as a dominant frame would have fostered a different set of expected risks and consequences, and required a different balance of forces to justify the war.

Post-conflict, if that can be accepted as an accurate description of the situation at the time of writing, Suez has been mobilised to retrospectively criticise the action taken. Robin Cook, a prominent critic of the war has repeatedly described the Iraq war as proving to be the ‘greatest blunder in British foreign and security policy since Suez’ (*The Independent*, 4/2/04: 16; also see *The Guardian*, 12/11/04: 30). A rather vitriolic and more personal connection has been made by George Galloway:

I consider Tony Blair to be a blood-soaked criminal, who at the bar of history will be utterly condemned. Few people know what political achievements Anthony Eden, prime minister at the time of the invasion of Suez, had to his name. That’s the point. The only thing Eden is remembered for is the criminal blunder of invading Egypt.

(Galloway, 2004: 102).

The details of how Tony Blair’s role in the justification and prosecution of the invasion of Iraq will be understood are yet to be established. Nevertheless, the possibility that his legacy will be ‘ruined’ by it, also proposed by Short (2004: 211), would probably be unappealing to him, although very appealing to Galloway.

Regardless, the negative connotations of the Suez crisis, although in circulation, were unable to achieve the hegemonic place of those associated with WWII. Had they done so, things may have turned out very differently.

### **8.5. *The Vietnam War (1961-75)***

A highly resonant historical analogy has been drawn between the recent military action and aspects of the Vietnam conflict. The

potential relevance of 'Vietnam' as a way of understanding war was also present in the military action to oust the Taliban in Afghanistan late in 2001. In an article negatively portraying the action, Air Vice Marshal Tony Mason, who served in the US Air Force during Vietnam wrote of 'ominous parallels' between the conflicts under the heading 'Could This Be Another Vietnam?' (*Daily Mail*, 20/3/02: 12; also see *Daily Mirror*, 1/11/01: 1).

Whilst less regularly invoked in advance of the invasion of Iraq, it has increased in usage as the violent resistance of the coalition's occupation has continued. For example, the venture capitalist, George Soros, who unsuccessfully dedicated himself to campaigning against George W. Bush's re-election, alleged parallels in terms of Iraq being a 'quagmire':

We find ourselves in a quagmire that is in some ways reminiscent of Vietnam. Having invaded Iraq, we cannot extricate ourselves. Domestic pressure to withdraw is likely to build, as in the Vietnam war, but withdrawing would inflict irreparable damage on our standing in the world. In this respect, Iraq is worse than Vietnam because of our dependence on Middle East oil.

(*The Guardian*, 26/1/04: 18).

Soros claimed that the situation in Iraq was actually worse than Vietnam – and we can assume that that makes it very bad indeed since the Vietnam conflict is widely regarded as a generally 'bad' war (certainly it is viewed as much less legitimate than WWII). The resonance of 'quagmire' as the most common metaphor through which Vietnam is understood and undermined (Kendrick, 1994: 135; Scheer, Scheer and Chaudry, 2003: 128; Rowe, 1991: 121), is certainly similar to the usage made of analogies with Vietnam in the context of Afghanistan in 2001. The resonance of quagmire, with its implications relating to inertia and being 'stuck' would seem likely to gain greater credence the longer the violent resistance to the coalition's occupation continues.

Daniel Ellsberg, the 'whistleblower' who leaked the Pentagon Papers during Vietnam, drew parallels between Iraq in early 2004 and the unwillingness of Vietnamese civilians to warn American troops during the conflict there:

There could not be a more exact parallel between this situation and Iraq. Our troops in Iraq keep walking into attacks in the course of patrols apparently designed to provide 'security' for civilians who, mysteriously, do not appear the slightest bit inclined to warn us of these attacks. This situation – as in Vietnam – is a harbinger of endless bloodletting. I believe American and British soldiers will be dying, and killing, in that country as long as they remain there.

As more and more US and British families lose loved ones in Iraq – killed while ostensibly protecting a population that does not appear to want them there – they will begin to ask: 'How did we get into this mess, and why are we still in it?' And the answers they find will be disturbingly similar to those the American public found for Vietnam

I served three US Presidents – Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon – who lied repeatedly and blatantly about our reasons for entering Vietnam, and the risks in our staying there. For the past year, I have found myself in the horrifying position of watching history repeat itself.

*(The Guardian, 27/1/04: 25).*

Ellsberg claims that the guerrilla form of the continuing violence in Iraq, and the reasons for invasion, are similar to Vietnam, although he does not state in what ways he believes this to be so. Nevertheless, he portrays the Iraq situation as history repeating itself – stronger than Soros's 'reminiscence'. A few months later, Edward Kennedy was quoted as saying that Iraq was turning into 'Bush's Vietnam' (Rupert Cornwell, *The Independent*, 7/4/04: 5), thereby personalising it too.

I have already mentioned that the Vietnam conflict tends to be considered a 'bad' war, and this generalisation needs a little explanation. It is obviously the case that its resonance is different for Britain and the USA, leading to a focus on different aspects of that conflict. Had Tony Blair not allowed the use of British troops in Iraq, rather than 'being' Anthony Eden as in the Suez analogy, would he

have been Harold Wilson, denying direct British assistance to Lyndon Johnson?

In American culture Vietnam is not necessarily viewed with consensus as a bad war, but it certainly has several dimensions that are difficult to reconcile with the nation's narratives of self-understanding. As mentioned in my literature review, this problematic status is often referred to as 'Vietnam syndrome' (Rampton and Stauber, 2003: 182; Martin, 1993: 53; Mariscal, 1991: 97) – a phenomenon thought to have organised many of the cultural representations made of the war both in the rhetoric of politicians, and more popular cultural artefacts such as books and film.

In their detailed comparison of the contexts of Vietnam and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Record and Terrill conclude that it is in terms of the aftermath and possible political consequences – the difficulty of sustaining support 'at home' – that there are the closest parallels. Moreover, they identify another way in which WWII provided the expectations for how events would progress, claiming that those in favour of war preferred the analogy with the replacement of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan with what are now flourishing democracies (Record and Terrill, 2004: 1), and that their expectations were such that:

*In Iraq, the U.S. leadership did not seem to expect protracted irregular warfare beyond the termination of major combat operations. As liberator of all Iraqis from a brutal tyranny, U.S. forces, it was widely believed, would be as welcomed in Iraq as had been Anglo-American and Free French forces in France in 1944.*

(Record and Terrill, 2004: 23).

As I have already noted, the Vietnam War tends to be acknowledged as a traumatic moment for the US, leading to a 'national identity crisis' (Hackett and Zhao, 1994: 535; Hackett, 1993) threatening America's 'master narrative of war', and incited the First Gulf War as an act of national redemption (Hackett, 1993: 51).

In an article also approximating this argument, Kendrick (1994: 130-1) identifies the public importance of war on Iraq ‘not being another Vietnam’, using metaphors such as ‘haunting’ and ‘phantom’ to describe the ways in which Vietnam causes difficulties and requires continual exorcism ‘through a ritual of comparison and denial’ (Kendrick, 1994: 137). Even Record and Terrill’s (2004) scholarly interrogation of the Vietnam analogy in 2003 is tied up with such a discourse of comparison and denial, and indicates the need to interrogate and compare events to Vietnam, and the extent to which, despite the allegedly successful exorcism in 1991, Vietnam still governs aspects of America’s discourse of military intervention. A single exorcism, it seems, is insufficient.

## 8.6. *Conclusion*

The issue of exorcism in the context of Vietnam may be directly related to the significance of the appeasement analogy in Britain – the apparently shared negative valuation of appeasement representing part of a similarly necessary ritual of comparison and denial of failed British policy in the 1930s.

In characteristic sweeping style, Baudrillard (1994: 116) claims that: ‘The metastases of all that resurfaces as history goes back over its own tracks in a compulsive desire for rehabilitation.’ Perhaps the interrogation and denial of appeasement represents a generalised pursuit of such rehabilitation – a need for national redemption, a ‘never again’ imperative similar to that associated with Vietnam in the US.

In addition to this possibility, it is important to recognise a more strategic dimension to the invocation of history more generally, including the fact that: ‘there is no history that is *not* motivated by the present’ (O’Leary, 2002: 82 original emphasis). As Misztal (2003b: 13) puts it: ‘By mediating and paring the past and the present, as well as providing analogies to events of the present in past events, collective memory is strategic in character and capable of influencing

the present.’ The apparent need for redemption, the need to never appease again, is harnessed to create discursive obstacles for those opposed to war. If the need for redemption persists, and if the problematisations of the accusation of appeasement largely continue to reinforce the importance of not engaging in it or reinvigorating it via reversal, it would seem unlikely that appeasement will be reduced in its significance as a technique for causing such difficulty for those opposed to future potential wars.

## 9. *The Ambivalence of Pacifism*

Pacifism [...] cannot be a majority faith because religion is not only an adjustment to the human condition but an expression of the political unit. There are certain limiting conditions pertaining to the political unit with respect to the use of force which make the attitudes of the pacifist sect or the monastic order politically impossible.

(Martin, 1965: 203).

### 9.1. *Pacifism as Illegitimate*

Another explanation advanced for opposition to military action was the influence of pacifism. This was particularly advanced as an explanation for the reticence of members of the Labour Party: 'The Parliamentary Labour Party is composed of its fair share of former card-carrying members of CND, and pacifism remains fundamental to many of them' (Simon Heffer, *Daily Mail*, 5/2/03: 12).

Here connections are made with the Cold War and its legacy via reference to CND. Arguably there is disrespect at work in terms of the 'card-carrying' nature of their membership, but this is rather muted, and does not violate the widely articulated yet ambivalent respect that pacifism receives.

Perhaps the most extreme example of disrespect applied to pacifism comes from someone who was actually also against war. Žižek (2003: 50) described it 'intellectually stupid' for its refusal to 'stand firm against a threat', and accused it of hypocrisy (Žižek, 2003: 27) for ignoring the fact that inspection work was possible *only* because of the threat of force. Nevertheless, such contempt was relatively rare, and a particular ambivalence results from the fact that 'principle', as something supposedly scarce nowadays, tends to be positively valued. Whilst the influence of pacifism may be something that disqualifies potential contributions to debate, in the build-up to war it did not seem to attract such



systematic moral contempt as the other identifications discussed thus far, since the principle upon which it is based makes a generalised negative evaluation itself problematic.

The following contribution articulates respect for pacifists, simultaneously taking a swipe at those who have allegedly less respectable reasons for opposing war:

Where these voices [of dissent] have belonged to pacifists, they have my respect, but most often they have belonged to the purely selfish, the pathologically timid, or to those who somehow believed that however bad things were in country X, the Americans were always worse.

(David Aaronovitch, *The Observer*, 2/2/03: 27).

Timidity, selfishness and anti-Americanism are all portrayed as illegitimate when understood in proximity with pacifism, which is more legitimate. Aaronovitch is also positioning himself as someone who is respectful towards principle by attempting to avoid the accusation that he is not.

A fortnight later on the same page as Aaronovitch's regular piece, Andrew Rawnsley attempted to deal with the complexity regarding who was on which side in the controversy, including reference to the 'customary' practice of expressing respect for pacifism, a position from which he distanced himself:

Public opinion is fluid and split. Even that slice of the people represented by the marchers is confused and divided. Some of those who marched are opposed to any war with anyone at anytime. *It is customary for a columnist to say at this point that naturally one has the most profound respect for the principles of pacifists. Actually, I'm not sure that I do entirely. War is always a wicked business, but there are occasions where it is a less wicked business than the alternative. Had everyone in America and Europe in 1945 declared for pacifism, we would now be subsumed into the Soviet bloc, which might be welcome to some revolutionary communists (Marxist-Leninist) but I am not sure to most of those in Hyde Park.* Some of those who marched are against anything done by the United States and/or Britain at any time. Some of the marchers – and for

this group I have great respect – genuinely detest Saddam, but they aren't convinced by the balance of risk and life, they aren't persuaded that military action is a more effective or civilised option than containment or deterrence.

*(The Observer, 16/2/03: 29, emphasis added).*

There is much going on here in terms of the positioning of self and others. The fragment contains some very rich discursive work related to many of this thesis' other chapters. There is recognition of the heterogeneity of those opposing war. Reference is made to those who are 'unreasonable' in the sense of being closed to the possibility of being persuaded to support war. The formulaic nature of expressions of respect for pacifism is identified, and disclaimed. Rawnsley then engages in a practice similar to those advocating war by arguing that war is bad, but is sometimes 'less wicked' than the alternative, invoking WWII. He then invokes 1945, associates a minority of the dissenters with revolutionary communism, and uses this in a 'guilt-by-association' manner with regard to the other more 'reasonable' people who marched. He then goes on to claim that some protesters are against whatever America and Britain do, all at the same time expressing respect for those who are 'genuinely' anti-Saddam but not yet convinced.

According to some contributions, the conviction that is held by pacifists is in one sense okay, but is also something that should have been called radically into question by the events of 9-11. For example, in his book, written whilst spending thirty days shadowing the Prime Minister in the build-up to war, Peter Stothard quotes Tony Blair:

'It's all very well being a pacifist,' the Prime Minister says suddenly, still with his back to his team. 'But to be a pacifist after September 11, that's something different. It's all new now: terrible threat, terrorist weapons, terrorist states. That is what people here have to understand.'

*(Stothard, 2003: 7).*

According to this, being a pacifist might have been reasonable in the past, but (since 9-11) it is no longer tenable, and reflects a lack of understanding, and refusal to be persuaded by evidence, of the alleged uniqueness of the circumstances with which the world is now faced. The stressing of the *specificity* of this particular case is something also present in some of the arguments of those in favour of invasion, which are to be dealt with in the following chapter.

Despite the 'customary' practice of expressing respect for pacifism, the arguments of those in favour of war, often nevertheless involved locating pacifism outside the legitimate parameters of debate in a manner similar to that of Blair. One of the most straightforward examples of this comes from the Member of the House of Lords and writer for *The Times* newspaper, William Rees-Mogg: 'A small minority take the isolationist, or pacifist, view: no war in any circumstances. They are outside the mainstream of the debate' (*The Times*, 21/10/02: 18).

The implication that those who are influenced by pacifism are tainted with something not belonging, and are therefore disqualified, is also present elsewhere. In the week immediately before the coalition's attack was launched, Richard Haas of the US State Department was quoted as saying:

Germany has marginalised itself. It's made itself a less important country. It has few relevant capabilities and even less will. If Germany wants to be purely pacifist, that is its choice. But then it's not a player.

(in Stephen Fidler, *Financial Times*, 10/3/03: 9).

Here, although Germany's 'choice' is portrayed as legitimate ('that is its choice'), it is also implied that someone making such a choice cannot subsequently expect to have a voice in contexts such as this. Embracing pacifism is a kind of active self-marginalisation that makes the one doing the embracing 'less important' and 'not a player'. As such pacifism's illegitimacy is more accurately described as technical rather than as moral

(although still portrayed as ‘unreasonable’ in the sense of being closed to persuasion). It is both deserving of respect *yet* also illegitimate as a position from which to contribute to debate on this matter (a disqualification).

Having their arguments associated with pacifism, which is outside the parameters of legitimate debate, those against war find themselves faced with a need to engage in discursive work in order to try and distance themselves from it. Indeed, Blix’s (2004: 171) account contains a denial of pacifism as an explanation for him wanting more time for UNMOVIC to carry out its inspections regime.

Below are three examples of other discursive work denying the influence of pacifism, one drawn from the editorial of each of the British daily newspapers which consistently opposed the military action:

The Mirror is not a pacifist newspaper. We reluctantly support military action where there is no alternative

*But we prefer peace to war. And we do not believe this war is justified.*

(Voice of the Daily Mirror, *Daily Mirror*, 28/1/03: 6, original emphasis).

War cannot and should not always be avoided. Here is no argument for a blanket pacifism; this newspaper supported the Kosovo intervention and the 1991 Gulf conflict. But war must be a means of last resort, when all else fails. That moment has not yet come. It may never do so

(Editorial, *The Guardian*, 30/1/03: 23).

[W]e remain to be convinced.

That is not because we are opposed to the use of force to uphold international law. We supported the war in Kosovo, conducted by a US-led coalition but not endorsed by the UN, because it averted imminent genocide and the negative consequences were limited. We supported the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan because that regime harboured people who posed a pressing threat to citizens of the West.

(Editorial, *The Independent*, 7/2/03: 16).

In the first of these examples, we are again dealing with a process of distancing – a type of triangulation. The *Mirror* distances itself *both* from the case for war, *and* from what are to be taken as less legitimate reasons for opposition to it. It therefore utilises the logic of the foil and the hierarchy of dissent, which I have already mentioned. It also denies pacifism by emphasising that there are circumstances in which it would support military action (‘where there is no alternative’), but also contrasting such circumstances with those facing it at that time. The other two examples both cite relatively recent situations – both referencing Kosovo – in which they have supported military action as evidence to ‘disprove’ any accusations of pacifism, with *The Independent* providing its reasons in those cases. In all three examples this case – Iraq – was claimed to be significantly different from these other contexts, so as to justify the significant difference in terms of their stance: they are differences which make a difference.

Similar discursive work was in evidence in a parliamentary context. Speaking on the day of publication of the government’s infamous ‘dossier’ on Iraq’s Weapons of Mass destruction (UK Government, 2002) David Heath said:

[S]ome portray those with doubts about military action as either wishing to support the Iraqi regime or being involved in a pacifism that does not take account of circumstances. *I think a great deal of respect is owed to those who have deeply held pacifist views, but many, myself included, do not have such views, and are quite prepared to see British military forces used in the right circumstances. We would argue, however, that these are not the right circumstances.*

Another caricature is the suggestion that those opposed to military action are engaging in a crude anti-Americanism. I reject that caricature, but I reject equally the caricature suggesting that the Prime Minister is engaging in this process simply because he wishes to curry favour with the Administration in the White House.

(Hansard, 2002b: 106, emphasis added).

Heath professes respect for pacifism, while distancing himself from it. He claims that he is prepared to support military action in some (hypothetical) circumstances, but claims that the context in question is different to those circumstances. As such, it is similar to the strategy used by the *Daily Mirror* above. After dealing with pacifism he follows with a familiar disclaimer regarding anti-Americanism. Interestingly, this does not involve claiming that ‘there are some who are anti-American, but I am not one of them’, instead amounting to an outright denial of the ‘caricature’ on behalf of all opposing war.

In the corresponding debate in the Lords, the Lord Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries similarly said:

I hope that your Lordships will forgive me if I stress that *not only am I not a pacifist but I am a long-standing opponent of the crypto-pacifism which has infiltrated too many Church statements* [...] I found that with much moral fear and spiritual trembling I supported a policy of nuclear deterrence in the bad days of the Cold War. I supported military action in the Falklands, against Iraq in 1990 and in Afghanistan last year. I believe that we should have intervened much earlier than we did in the aftermath of the break up of Yugoslavia. I took such positions because I believed that the conditions for force to be used in a morally licit way were met. I do not believe that on present evidence the criteria are met for military action against Iraq.

(Hansard, 2002c: 898, emphasis added).

Harries also stresses that he is not a pacifist, supporting this with a claim about a ‘long-standing’ opposition to pacifism. He claims a history of behaving in a particular way and examination of his communicative career would provide evidence that he was not opposed to war in the abstract. Since Harries arguably has a reputation as someone to whom journalists turn to get a ‘Bishop Supports War’ headline, this would be unlikely to be denied by others. Harries also gives examples of situations when, despite ‘moral fear and spiritual trembling’, he supported war. The criteria that justified these wars are contrasted with the situation of

Iraq – they are not ‘met’ on the present evidence. This also leaves open the possibility that the evidence could change, and that he could be persuaded, thereby confirming him as open to persuasion and therefore ‘reasonable’.

One issue deemed of some importance is the question of consistency, and here we are again in the realms of the communicative career. Whilst many of those against war were denying the influence of pacifism, one of the ways that those in favour of war tried to contain the dissent was to claim that *only* pacifists could oppose it. For example:

You can oppose the ultimate use of force in this very special case if you are a true pacifist. But do not call on foreign troops to be used to stop genocides in Rwanda, or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, or to promote democracy elsewhere if you are not willing to have them used to deal with this genocidal, ethnic-cleansing, power-hungry dictator. Otherwise you are a hypocrite.

(Bill Emmott, *The Guardian*, 25/11/02: 18).

Specific objections to this particular war are portrayed as hypocritical, and therefore problematic in terms of their legitimacy, largely due to a comparative moral evaluation made of the situation in Iraq (as genocide). This logic – a demand for consistency – has an institutional corollary in that evidence of a systematic pacifistic stance is required for a member of the US military to become a conscientiously objector. It is not considered sufficient to object to a particular war, more long-standing evidence or evidence of a radical conversion is required, something which was problematic in the high-profile cases of both Mohsin Khan and Vic Williams in the recent conflict (see Natasha Walter, *The Guardian: Weekend*, 12/6/04: 41).

## 9.2. A ‘Technical’ Disqualification?

The dynamics around pacifism, whilst in many ways similar to other issues such as anti-Americanism in terms of the strategies

and evidence used to resist such accusations, are also rather different. It is rare for pacifism to attract the same vitriolic level of condemnation that some other categorisations attract. For example, the previous chapter noted that it tends to be viewed positively explicitly in contrast to appeasement.

In his treatment of pacifism from within the sociology of religion, as well as detailing its religious roots, and its relationship to the Labour Party, Martin (1965: 133) points out that pacifism is 'politically impotent'. As the Martin quotation at the start of the chapter points out it does not really fit within the general boundaries (limits) of the political system – it is disqualified as systematically 'unrealistic'.

Martin (1965: 187-8) also claims that pacifism is rather 'evanescent', and similar assessments appear to have operated in the debate preceding invasion of Iraq, with pacifism viewed as a quantitatively and qualitatively marginal orientation (also see Narveson, 1999: 120). It is not observed as constituting a 'threat' as great as anti-Americanism – it is less virulent; less likely to spread widely – a perpetual minority.

Nevertheless, although not condemned as strongly, those arguing against war often deny pacifism since its influence would compromise the legitimacy of their contribution, amounting to an admission that they were incapable of being persuaded that violence and war are ever acceptable. As with other strategies of resistance, those denying its influence are reaffirming the place of pacifism as lying 'outside' the boundaries of legitimate debate in deliberations over the waging of war, and therefore, in a sense, making use of pacifists as a buffer for their own legitimacy.

Of course, it is important to recognise that part of the reason for pacifism being a disqualification is that the whole debate became a polarised for/against war discussion rather than a 'what should be done' one. The discursive context was framed by a discourse of military intervention similar to that identified by Richardson (2004) in relation to the earlier Operation Desert Fox in 1998, with



the military being allocated a position as a privileged solution to the problems of the 'war on terror(ism)' (Kellner, 2002: 155). Complete non-violence was excluded in advance – pacifists were therefore without 'category entitlement' (Potter, 1996: 15) in the context.

The significance of the accusation and denial of pacifism is therefore directly connected to the extent to which the whole situation was taking place in a discursive space organised by the central metaphor of 'war', indeed the formulaic phrase 'war on terrorism' with an accompanying for/against distinction with other radically different proposals for how to proceed almost completely excluded. In connection with this recognition it might be possible to suggest that, as a disqualifying attribution, pacifism is more contextually specific than 'anti-Americanism' and some of the others. Anti-Americanism, for example, is less limited in its degree of transportability to other contexts, since it could be much more easily deemed of relevance in other contexts outside those of war or violence.

So far I have focussed upon problems faced by anti-war contributors, but I now turn to one of the major obstacles potentially faced by those advocating war – what could be considered the opposite accusation to that of pacifism – the accusation that those advocating war were engaged in warmongering.

## 10. Warmongering

There is not an inexorable decision to go to war. There is an inexorable decision to disarm Saddam Hussein. How that happens is up to Saddam.

(Blair, 2003).

My Lords, I speak not only for myself, as does every noble Lord in this Chamber, but on behalf of the Green Movement worldwide [...]

We believe that the invasion of Iraq is illegal, and we are quite sure it is immoral. We believe that going to war is an action of last resort, and we were under the impression that that view was shared by all men and women of goodwill.

It is quite clear that the invasion of Iraq is not a last resort, and the world as a whole is aware of that. Indeed, for the Americans, it was high on the list of resorts.

(Lord Beaumont of Whitley [Green], Hansard, 2003e: 169).

As we have seen elsewhere, the logic of the positioning involved on the question of war on Iraq was governed by a for/against distinction, a distinction which I have been reproducing, albeit in a manner acknowledging differences amongst those occupying each position.

Thus far, I have concentrated upon the problems faced, and evasive manoeuvres engaged in, by those speaking against war. Although there are obviously asymmetries of power and other resources with regard to the two 'sides', those in favour of war are also involved in denying potentially relevant disqualifying attributions. There are also ways in which they were required to avoid a range of illegitimate descriptions in attempts to pursue moral force for their own arguments. They do not somehow get a free ride.

The most obviously relevant accusation requiring their evasive action is their potential description as 'warmongers', since a warmonger's positive disposition towards war (if not eagerness for it), calls their position on a specific case into disrepute as merely another example of that wider pattern.

As might be expected, there are many examples of people disclaiming any identification of them as a ‘warmonger’, and they go about this in various ways. For example, by denying it directly, by pointing to a dislike of war, or by claiming the existence of a wider consensus – that *no-one* is in favour of war. Examples of each of these are discussed in detail below. First, however, it will be helpful to look at a few examples of people engaging in direct and indirect accusation about ‘warmongers’.

### 10.1. *Examples of Accusation*

Before passage of UNSCR 1441, when the possibility of a return of weapons inspectors to Iraq was on the agenda, Tariq Aziz, then Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister, spoke about the possibility of opening a dialogue:

We are ready to put all the facts on the table and reach a conclusion – but if the warmongers are using this matter as a pretext in order to attack Iraq, to wage an unacceptable war against Iraq, that’s something else.

(in Richard Beeston, *The Times*, 4/9/02: 4).

Although he does not specify the ‘warmongers’ he has in mind, the US and UK governments were probably the intended targets of the name-calling since they were the states most closely associated with a drive towards war. Aziz’s contribution also contains one half of a distinction that was of some import in the build-up to war.

This is the distinction between a *pretext*, which is illegitimate (Bamford, 2004), implying that a decision had already been made and all that was required was an *excuse*, and a *casus belli* – a more valid reason, something discovered rather than created – which makes military action *necessary*. This distinction, particularly in terms of the difference regarding the order in which a reason and a course of action come, goes right to the heart of the question of legitimacy.

According to Record and Terrill (2004: 52) the distinction between a ‘war of necessity’ and a ‘war of choice’, which is obviously

closely associated with this reason/excuse distinction is also highly consequential for the degree of public tolerance to casualties. Assessing the question of whether the action taken was necessary, Singer (2004: 167) echoes Lord Beaumont's quotation from the start of the chapter by stating emphatically that the invasion was not one of necessity: 'This was very far from being a war of last resort.' The extent to which this assessment is shared by others may well affect the way in which the ongoing violence and coalition casualties are perceived, and the war understood in the longer term.

While there may be a significant degree of moral asymmetry to these distinctions, this does not automatically make them line up neatly with for/against orientations. For example, Salam Pax, the Iraqi citizen achieving a degree of fame by producing the 'Baghdad Blog', a weblog of his experiences of the invasion. He was in favour of regime change, but viewed the build-up as relying upon *excuses* rather than *reasons* (Pax, 2003: 119). As someone living under Saddam Hussein's rule, it is relatively easy to see why he might be nevertheless unconcerned with the moral textures of the process of justification.

Returning to the question of warmongering, the *Daily Mirror*, which was consistent in its opposition to war was particularly vitriolic in its portrayal of the Bush administration – describing it as engaged in 'insane warmongering' (Voice of the Daily Mirror, *Daily Mirror*, 18/12/03: 8). Earlier on in the unfolding process, in coverage of Dick Cheney's visit to see Tony Blair in March 2002, it made intertextual reference to cult horror film *American Werewolf in London* (John Landis, 1981) in order to produce the headline 'American Warwolf in London' (*Daily Mirror*, 12/3/02: 1). Cheney was depicted as a werewolf, mobilising the violent associations of 'wolves,' as well as the 'horror' elements of lycanthropy, with a computer altered image of his face with added fur and sharp canine teeth. At the start of the accompanying story he was also described as 'WARMONGERING' (original capitalisation). Incidentally, the caption with the photo referred to the film as involving Lon Chaney Junior, a regular star of B-movies featuring werewolves, but who died over five years before

the film was made. The name Chaney (pronounced in the same way as the Vice President's name) has ever since been closely connected with werewolves – this association, unfortunate though it may be for the US Vice President, was perhaps the source of the 'error'. This was not alone as an intertextual reference to the horror genre, since Richard Perle, former chair of the US Defense Policy Board is widely labelled 'the Prince of Darkness' (Shawcross, 2004: 54; Crockatt, 2003: 158).

Writing from a position opposed to war, Simon Tisdall described 'second Gulf War syndrome':

On the absence of a lead from the Blair government the *warmongers* have had an ideal opportunity to make their case [...]

When all else fails, warmongers resort, with unconscious irony, to morality [...] Saddam is bad [...] The president often falls back on this 'us' versus 'them' argument [...]

Riding gallantly to Bush's rescue comes Daily Mail columnist Melanie Phillips. For her, the reasons for bashing Saddam are obvious. She devotes her energies instead to questioning the motives of those who do not agree.

These are the 'appeasement factions'. These are the people who are really ill, suffering from 'a truly pathological anti-Americanism', she writes. The intimate bedfellows of those holding such views are 'anti-Jewish hatred' and 'Islamic Fascism' [...]

It is when *the warrior class* reaches this intemperate logic-shredding point in its discourse that those opposed to the war know they can win.'

(*The Guardian*, 7/8/02: 16, emphasis added).

This negative portrayal of 'warmongers' ('warrior class') also ironises their claims about those against war. The name-calling in which they are engaged is portrayed as unreasonable, 'logic-shredding', and unfair. Those in favour of war are in violation of a rule requiring that they confine themselves to making their own case in a reasonable manner. Tisdall is of course also engaged in name-calling about his opponents – and on his own criteria is arguably shredding logic! Considering such possibilities is getting a little far away from the extract, but the significance of some conception of 'reasonable'

arguments is observable even if not adhered to by those implying its importance.

Tisdall's 'warrior class' loosely corresponds with what Gerard Baker called the 'war-now brigade':

The *war-now brigade* thinks its case is so overwhelming that only an apologist for Saddam Hussein could oppose it. The war-never crowd thinks the whole thing has been got up by the US in a fit of evil madness. [...] Mr Hussein is an evil man and I have not a shred of doubt that the world would be a far safer place without him. But a preventive war is an extraordinary step that requires an extraordinary level of confidence that it is really the only means to avert a greater tragedy.

(*Financial Times*, 27/1/03: 21).

Not only are people identified as in favour or war, but others characterised as wanting war 'now' or 'never'. Baker positions himself as somewhere other than where these two rather contemptuously named 'crowds' are located. He claims that he is currently against war, but not eternally so – if the 'extraordinary level of confidence' required for justification can be achieved. Aside from positioning himself as open to persuasion, what is most significant about Baker's contribution is the importance attributed to the twin issues of time and patience. If you want war 'now' you are impatient for it, whereas if you want it 'never' then it does not matter how much time and effort go unsuccessfully into achieving a diplomatic solution, you are unwilling to countenance war – your patience is infinite.

The recurrence of this theme of 'warmongering' meant that for those speaking out in favour of military action, there was a risk of being accused of it – something requiring their engagement in evasive action, several examples of which are discussed below.

## **10.2. *I am Not a Warmonger, But...***

Some contributions resisting the circulation of such accusations directly invoked the term 'warmonger' whilst denying its applicability to them. For example, journalist Rupert Hamer quoted Captain Tim

Fraser, a member of the British military as saying: 'We are not warmongers. I would much rather that the situation in Iraq is resolved through diplomatic means. But we understand the threat and we are prepared for it' (*Daily Mirror*, 22/12/02: 6).

In this case a desire (or preference) for a diplomatic solution is claimed, and used in disclaiming the identity of a warmonger. Captain Fraser, and the army are not eager for war, *but* understand it and are prepared to fight it if *necessary*, though they would prefer it not to be required.

Another example comes from Jason Burke:

I am not a warmonger. I have seen half a dozen conflicts at close quarters and know exactly what shrapnel does to the flesh and bullet does to bone [...] It is a war being fought for the wrong reasons, at the wrong time and has been sold in the wrong way. But this war is right.

(*The Observer*, 9/3/03: 16).

Here experience of witnessing the effects of war is used to try and defeat any accusation that his position in favour of war is the product of his being systematically in favour of it. Burke also uses a contrastive logic to add force to his position: given that he has seen what shrapnel and bullets do, and is not positively disposed to war, the reasons, moral and otherwise, motivating him in this specific case must be very powerful in order to have overridden his general aversion and led to his thinking that it is 'right', even if he also distances himself from the official reasons which are 'wrong'.

Finally, here are two contributions from parliamentary context, both from Lord Maginnis of Drumglass [Crossbench] in separate debates as military action became imminent:

I am no warmonger, neither do I have to convince anyone that I would prefer peace. But I have learnt the hard way to be a realist. We should waste very, very little more time.

(Hansard, 2003b: 329).

I am no warmonger. War is and should be the last resort. But I believe in moral obligations and that war may be the only way to avert greater wars, greater aggression and greater oppression.

(Hansard, 2003e: 176).

In the first of these extracts, Lord Maginnis claims that his position is not that of a warmonger, but that of a ‘realist’, and that he has learnt ‘the hard way’ that this is the best position to occupy. Interestingly, he also refers to the amount of time for which the issue has run. In the second, he also denies directly that he is a warmonger, and claims that war should be a matter of ‘last resort’. Reference is made to moral obligations, and the possibility that a war can be justified if it averts a greater and more serious war later. Echoing arguments from previous chapters, he implies that a little bit of war now can put off a much worse confrontation later.

### **10.3. *I Dislike War, But...***

The theme of a dislike for war is also observable in other contributions in favour of military action, although not always directly addressing the notion of ‘warmongering’. In such cases it is the contributor’s *general orientation* towards war which is invoked. If they are to be believed, they are most definitely *not* in favour of war *per se*. For example, Sir Nicholas Winterton [Conservative]:

I am not in favour of war. In fact, I am *positively opposed* to it. War is brutal, cruel and indiscriminate. Innocent people will undoubtedly die in any conflict that takes place, but there are occasions on which war is inevitable if the civilised world is to defend its civilisation against a despotic tyrant such as Saddam Hussein.

(Hansard, 2003d: 800, emphasis added).

Here several negative adjectives are applied to war – it is generally ‘brutal, cruel and indiscriminate’. This description is followed by a ‘but’ – that war can be ‘inevitable’ if the ‘civilised world’ needs to defend itself, in this case against the specific threat of a ‘despotic



tyrant'. It is not the general moral evaluation of war that is therefore at stake – although portrayed as generally 'bad' – it is its alleged necessity in this specific situation that matters.

A similar example comes from Labour MP, Hugh Bayley:

*I detest the prospect of war* every bit as much as the many constituents who have written to me opposing it, but I do not believe that we can ignore the threat that Iraq poses to neighbouring states, the gross violation of the human rights of the Iraqi people or the risk that the Iraqi regime will at some point in the future supply chemical or biological agents to terrorists who might use them in this country or elsewhere in Europe.

(Hansard, 2003d: 841, emphasis added).

Again negative observations about war in general are contrasted with the situational specifics of Iraq, including future risks allegedly resulting from inaction. Bayley claims to 'detest the prospect of war', and claims agreement with his constituents on this, *but* there is something more important at stake which overrides his general aversion – the 'threat' posed by Iraq.

The immediacy of threat often depicted in such arguments was subsequently disclaimed by proponents of war such as Jack Straw, in the face of problems relating to the failure to find WMD in Iraq. This was pursued by via a morally asymmetric distinction drawn between an 'immediate and imminent' and a 'current and serious' threat (Curtis, 2004: 75). Retrospectively, although not necessarily an 'immediate' threat, Iraq was portrayed as an 'inevitable' threat (Shawcross, 2004: 233) and therefore war is claimed as justified.

#### **10.4. *None of Us Wants War, But...***

Another way of disclaiming a generally positive orientation toward war, involves people stressing their membership of a wider community disliking war. As ever, a declaration of membership of this 'we' is often followed by a 'but' with specific situational reasons for being in favour of it in this case.

For example, according to the then Conservative Shadow Defence Minister, Michael Ancram: ‘None of us wants war, but to secure peace, it is sometimes necessary to prepare for war’ (Hansard, 2002d: 71). Three months later he echoed this, stating:

None of us wants war [...] However, sometimes conflict is necessary in the short term to achieve peace through the defeat of aggression, and sometimes it is the threat of conflict that can establish peace.

(Hansard, 2003b: 276-7).

Both of these examples claim *unanimity* regarding the desire to avoid war. In contrast to the immediately preceding subsection, Ancram is not only talking about himself but also talking about everyone within a wider, albeit unspecified, community. Also, although the general orientation to war is contrasted with something, it is not only the specific situation of Iraq, it is a broader ‘sometimes’.

There is arguably something ‘Orwellian’ about some of this logic. Ancram is not quite saying that war is peace, but that peace requires a readiness for war. A willingness to go to war has to exist to support peace – something touched upon indirectly in previous chapters.

This pseudo-Orwellian logic is further typified by Donald Rumsfeld’s speech at the Munich Conference on European Security (8/2/03):

We all hope for a peaceful solution. But the one chance for a peaceful solution is to make clear that free nations are prepared to use force if necessary – that the world is united and, while reluctant, is willing to act.

(Rumsfeld, 2003a).

Another example of claiming membership of a wider consensus generally against war comes from Tony Blair, who in September 2002 is quoted as saying: ‘I hate war. Anyone with any sense hates war. But there are certain circumstances in which it is the right thing to do’ (in Andy McSmith, *et al.*, *The Daily Telegraph*, 4/9/02: 1).

Blair's 'community' of agreement is more restricted than Michael Ancram's, being limited to only those 'with any sense', but it is similarly a more general 'certain circumstances' that can justify, again more expansive than only those cases fitting closely with that of Iraq.

It is noteworthy that the article containing this quotation was placed next to a widely used picture of Tony Blair, supplied by Reuters, with his thumbs in his belt 'ready for the draw', asking the question 'Has Tony Blair been spending too much time down on the ranch with Dubya?' (also see *Daily Mail*, 4/9/02: 5; *Daily Mirror*, 4/9/02: 5; *The Sunday Telegraph*, 8/9/02: 19). The implication was that his bodily movements indicated that he was acquiring from George W. Bush some of the characteristics of a 'cowboy'. The following day, the *Mirror* (5/9/02: 7) continued with this Cowboy theme, depicting Blair as 'the Sedgfield Kid'.

Another interesting contribution comes from an editorial in *The Sun*:

**When U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney says Saddam Hussein must be attacked, the world should take heed.**

Cheney is a cautious, level-headed man not given to wild warmongering [...]

Saddam is a clear and present danger to the West.

Of course, no one wants a war.

Attacking Iraq would carry political and economic perils.

**But the danger of doing nothing is that Saddam will one day blow us all up.**

(The Sun Says, *The Sun*, 28/8/02: 8, original emphasis).

Here another consensus is invoked – 'no one wants a war' – juxtaposed with an assertion about the 'danger of doing nothing', i.e., 'that one day Saddam will blow us all up'. This risk requires action despite the claimed universal desire to avoid war.

Within this example, a contrastive logic is deployed regarding US Vice President Dick Cheney. He is claimed to be 'cautious, level-

headed and not given to wild warmongering’, and based upon this, if he is in favour of military action then everyone else should realise the gravity of the situation. The persuasive force of this contrast is of course reliant upon acceptance that Cheney is normally ‘not given to wild warmongering’, which I imagine might not be easily achieved! A starker contrast than that between *The Sun*’s portrayal of Cheney here and that made by the *Daily Mirror* of him as a ‘Warwolf’ (see above) would be hard to find.

Finally, another example claiming a consensus against war, also allocated the responsibility for any necessary action – a practice also more widely present in the debates:

None of us wants to see that; none of us wants to see military conflict. We do not want war. It is indeed terrible to contemplate. But the time may soon upon us all when Saddam Hussein makes his choice, when he rejects the wishes of the international community and instead chooses fear, violence, terrorism and dictatorship.

(Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Hansard, 2003b: 251).

Again, this describes what ‘none of us’ wants, and for emphasis ‘none of us’ is repeated. War is described as ‘terrible to contemplate’. By now, the significance of the contrastive ‘but’ will be entirely familiar, and Baroness Symons follows this with a description of Saddam Hussein’s likely course of action. The situation described is one in which Hussein’s decision is determinant – if there is war it will ultimately be his agency that caused it. He has the power to avoid it by complying with UNSCR 1441, so any war will be due to his failure to act in the available manner to avoid it.

### **10.5. *Selectivity of Enforcement***

In relation to the issue of the specificity of Iraq as an appropriate context for military action, some opponents of war contrastively invoked other contexts and questioned why military action was not being proposed in them.

Various contributions asked why the implementation of UN resolutions was not pursued with such conviction when they applied to Israel, Cyprus and Turkey, or why the use of military force was not being considered against other 'rogue states' or 'countries of concern' such as Iran and North Korea (also see Kampfner, 2004: 228).

Given the volatile situation prevalent in the Middle East, the situation's proximity to Iraq, and the associated allegations that the war was intended by the West as an anti-Islamic action, it is unsurprising that one of the most problematic such questions related to Israel. Those more positively disposed towards the invasion addressed such assertions by drawing yet another distinction (identifying another a difference that makes a difference) – that between two 'types' of UN Security Council Resolutions:

The UN distinguishes between two sorts of Security Council resolution. Those passed under Chapter Six deal with the peaceful resolution of disputes and entitle the council to make non-binding recommendations. Those under Chapter Seven give the council broad powers to take action, including warlike action, to deal with 'threats to peace, breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression'

(Leader, *The Economist*, 12-18/10/02: 23-4).

Since no Chapter Seven resolutions apply to Israel, and those applying to are (non-binding) recommendations which cannot be implemented unilaterally, it is claimed that they can be treated differently.

Whether or not this is enough to convince those who claimed that there was unfair selectivity going on would seem unlikely, but it is certainly another example of responding to apparent tensions by the drawing of ever finer distinctions.

### **10.6. *No Decision Has Yet Been Made***

A recurrent theme in statements made by the British government in the build-up to war concerned the extent to which talk of an invasion was premature – those discussing it were 'getting ahead of themselves'. For example: 'No decision has yet been taken by Her Majesty's

Government and I fervently hope none will be necessary.’ (Jack Straw, Hansard, 2002d: 55).

Questioning the truthfulness of such statements was one angle adopted by those against war, but my interest in them relates instead to understanding why it would have been advantageous if the declarations were accepted as true – the specific difference that makes.

Such declarations regarding the absence of a decision (yet) were observed as repetitive by members of the British press opposed to war. This ‘constant refrain’ of ‘no decisions have yet been made’ was noted by Rai (2002: 199) in his account in advance of invasion. Below are two similar examples of understandings given to the declarations, drawn from editorials on the same day:

For months Tony Blair has repeated a mantra. Military action against Iraq is not imminent. We are not yet at the point of decision. We should not get ahead of ourselves.

(Editorial, *The Guardian*, 28/8/02: 19).

For the moment, the White House shelters behind its mantra that “no decision has been taken” absurdly blaming the media for a ‘frenzy’ of speculation for which it alone is responsible.

(Editorial, *The Independent*, 28/8/02: 16).

Although referring to different speakers and different variations of the phrase, both examples described it as a ‘mantra’. In both cases there is contempt expressed for the practice of continually making the statement, the implication being that it is repeated in a rather formulaic manner for sound-bite-related reasons. Although its truthfulness may therefore be suspect, it is not addressed directly.

The primary means adopted to problematise this regularly heard call to ‘hold your horses’ was to invoke the futility of ‘closing the stable door after the horse has already bolted’. In coverage of one such attempt at problematisation, Donald MacIntyre paraphrased Baroness Williams of Crosby [Liberal Democrat], characterising her arguments as ‘entirely reasonable’. The call for a debate now rather

than later was: ‘best expressed by Baroness Williams of Crosby last week when she complained with incontestable logic that it was always too early to debate a war until it was too late’ (*The Independent*, 30/7/02: 12).

Baroness Williams’ complaint neatly sums up the significance of the deferral of the moment of decision – the longer that no decision is made (officially) the more difficult it becomes to not make the decision that has already achieved huge momentum in the prevalent definition of the situation. War was on the cards for a very long time before any official announcement of the decision was made, and things were so close to occurring that preventing British involvement was virtually impossible by the time that the House of Commons was given its vote on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

### ***10.7. Huge Diplomatic Efforts and the Credible Threat of Force***

Closely associated with the deferral of the moment of decision is another type of argument utilised increasingly as war drew near – claims about the effort that had gone into avoiding war – stressing the amount of diplomatic activity engaged in, as well as arguments that all diplomatic activity would have been fruitless without the threat of war backing it up. For example:

[T]his is a moment that we hoped we would not reach; a moment that my right honourable friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and many others, have worked immensely hard to avoid through our huge diplomatic efforts.

(Baroness Symonds of Vernham Dean, Hansard, 2003e: 223).

The moment of decision is portrayed as unwanted and this is evinced by the fact that the government have worked ‘immensely hard’ with ‘huge diplomatic efforts’ to avoid it. Also, since ‘we’ have tried so hard to avoid war – responsibility for the present situation is deflected onto a non-compliant Saddam Hussein.

This logic was still being utilised nearly a year after the war had commenced. The week after publication of the Hutton Report (Hutton, 2004), Geoff Hoon, being interviewed on BBC Radio 5's *Breakfast* show (5/2/04) stated that: 'we went to extraordinary lengths to avoid war'. This goes close to claiming that they went 'too far' in attempting to avoid war. For something to be 'extraordinary', it requires a point of ordinariness with which it can be contrasted, so the implication is that going to war when they did was more than reasonable since it was long after a watershed in the process at which war would have been justified.

There are many other contributions claiming that without the threat of war the diplomatic manoeuvres would have achieved little. For example, an editorial from *The Sunday Telegraph* shortly before George W. Bush's challenge to the UN (12/9/02), and before the UN began drafting UNSCR 1441:

[I]t is scarcely likely that Saddam would be talking to the UN at all about the return to Iraq of arms inspectors – on his terms, of course, if the US had not made clear its readiness to take military action against him.

(Editorial, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 1/9/02: 18).

The claim is that without evidence of the US' willingness or 'readiness' to use force (presumably 'as a last resort') even minimal Iraqi cooperation over UN weapons inspections would not have materialised. Therefore, in order to try and avoid war, it was necessary to be observed as prepared for it. Subsequently this type of argument was a common means of relating to (and attempting to defeat) the arguments of those claiming that diplomatic channels were achieving progress. Once the UN inspectors were back in Iraq, any mention of their achievements, or any assertion that the inspections process was bringing results, was countered with a similar argument – that without the threat of force, none of its achievements would have been at all possible. For example:



The fact that the UN inspectors have gone back to Iraq, and some progress, albeit modest, has been made owes a great deal to the joint military pressure mounted by both the United States and the United Kingdom. That cannot be denied.

(Lord Thomson of Monifieth [Liberal Democrat], Hansard, 2003b: 267).

These types of assertion were even accepted by former head of UNMOVIC Hans Blix (2004: 11) – the possibility of a non-military solution was itself only possible against a background in which military force loomed.

Other contributions to debate addressed the issue of credibility, and its relationship to time, arguing that the threat of force could only remain credible for a limited period. For example:

Those who say that action is not necessary now must remember that we have passed so many deadlines, so many ultimatums, that not to take any action now is to reduce the credibility of any action being taken.

(William Hague, Hansard, 2003d: 793).

If peaceful means are continually pursued despite an insufficient level of cooperation, then the ‘preparedness’ of ‘the coalition’ to utilise force be called into question. Therefore the assumed effectiveness or ‘credibility’ of the military threat supporting up the diplomacy will be reduced, since Saddam Hussein will think that it is mere sabre-rattling.

Again on the question of effort, but also addressing the question of responsibility, Lord Strathclyde made a similar argument:

War must always be the last resort. But few can say that the Government – and the US Government – have not gone the last mile to avoid it. And few can claim that Saddam, in the final phase of a vicious and bloodthirsty career, has taken any more than token steps to prevent a conflict that he has had in his hands for months – indeed, years – to avoid.

(Hansard, 2003e: 143-4).

Beginning with a familiar structure of ‘war must always be the last resort’ followed by a ‘but’, this contribution engages in a variety of

activities. It stresses the process of attempting to avoid war, and portrays as a minority view any assertion that considerable efforts have not gone into its avoidance ('few can say'). Strathclyde then also minimises Iraqi cooperation ('token steps'), and also tries to minoritise those claiming that cooperation has been sufficient ('few can claim'). He describes Saddam Hussein's 'vicious and bloodthirsty career', and deflects responsibility for any subsequent military action away from the coalition by asserting that Hussein has had the ability to avoid the conflict for 'months – indeed, years'. The ball has been in his court, and he has been unwilling to return it.

The issues of time, and speed of the movement towards war, were also important themes. This included the way in which long-term inaction (for 12 years) was portrayed positively rather than as a past failure to act decisively – allowing those advocating war to claim that they were not rushing things. Dossiers published by both the White House (2002: 2) and UK Government (2002: 33-4) stressed the time elapsed since the issue arose, and the number of resolutions violated by Iraq.

In one of his monthly press conferences Tony Blair claimed that: '[T]here is no rush to war. Indeed we have waited 12 years' (Blair, 2003). This was claimed as 'hardly a sign of impatience' (Editorial, *The Economist*, 19/7/03: 10), thereby assisting the portrayal of war as an 'absolute last option' (George W. Bush in Woodward, 2004: 3).

Associated with this invocation of time was the constant iteration of the number of resolutions Iraq was violating – 23 out of 27 obligations from nine resolutions (Anton La Guardia, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6/9/02: 4), or direct material breach of 16 resolutions (Andrew Buncombe and Andrew Grice, *The Independent*, 28/9/02: 6).

The importance variously placed upon invocation of the effort put into war's avoidance implies that a lack of eagerness is a key component in pursuit of demonstrating that you are not systematically in favour of war – a warmonger – but also that a simultaneous willingness to use force is assumed to be necessary in order to support

the associated diplomatic measures, and during 2002-3 the talking up of war in pursuit of avoiding it became known as the 'Straw Paradox' (Kampfner, 2004: 302) because of Jack Straw's engagement in it.

One possible implication of this is that talk about warmongering can actually work to your advantage if you are one of those so accused. A shrill and intense caricature of 'hawkishness', if it fosters extreme expectations of your behaviour, can make it easier to provide evidence violating such a portrayal. Based upon such an understanding it might be possible to claim that the extreme portrayals of the US administration made by those against the war – as crazed, hawkish, warmongers desperate to go to unilateral war as soon as possible – were ultimately self-defeating in the sense that they were easily violated:

There are those in the House and outside who fervently believed that the US would act without a UN Security Council resolution. To my relief, it went down the Security Council path, compromised and was patient.

(Bruce George [Labour], Hansard, 2002d: 81).

If your opponents are vocal about how rushed and unthinking your actions will be, it can be relatively easy to evade such characterisations by not acting in such a manner; not acting according to the script already written.

### **10.8. *Avian Metaphors***

A common way in which the differences between those eager for war and those eager to avoid it are understood is through various avian metaphors, and considerable prominence was given to the use of bird species to make sense of some of the positions adopted within the debate building up to the invasion of Iraq. Of course, the most recurrent of these was undoubtedly the invocation of the hawk/dove distinction, a hawk being a naturally violent bird of prey, and a dove being a widely regarded symbol of peace. This distinction has a long

history of use in the context of military and foreign policy, particularly in reference to the United States.

Pollack (2002: 56) claims that neither term is adequate to account for the complexities involved, and of particular interest in the public debate was the way in which these two birds were supplemented with slight variations in the species invoked. For example, writing about the American Left's calls to bring back the draft so as to undermine the skewed class and ethnic composition of the military, Toby Harnden (*The Daily Telegraph*, 25/1/04: 14) invoked the term 'chicken hawks' in reference to 'hardline civilian advisers' without military experience of their own. According to Hitchens (2003: 21) this also mobilises a connection with paedophilia in the US, but there is a more obvious association with cowardice, via the resonance of 'chicken'. Those to whom the label refers are a curious blend of warmonger and war avoider – in favour of war because they have no personal experience of it, or are hawkish as long as they will not be put directly at risk.

Also unfavourably, Peter Kilfoyle (Hansard, 2002b: 110) claimed that US government officials in favour of war were not hawks, but pterodactyls – either implying that they were more violent and less thinking than a hawk, or that their policy ideas merited description as the product of dinosaurs.

Similarly, writing even before 9-11, Julian Borger (*The Guardian*, 29/6/01: 4) quotes an even more personalised example of this from an unnamed former colleague of Paul Wolfowitz, US Deputy Secretary of Defense: 'Hawk doesn't do him justice [...] What about velociraptor?'. As anyone who has seen *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) 'knows', the velociraptor is physiologically similar to a bird and even more violent. The dinosaur connection was also made by former South African President Nelson Mandela in an interview with journalist Gary Younge (*The Guardian: G2*, 19/9/02: 2-3) specifically in relation to Dick Cheney's advisers.

The invocation of avian metaphors was not confined to those negatively portraying those in favour of war. They also accused their

opponents of possessing various bird-like ‘qualities’. For example, Amity Shlaes (*Financial Times*, 11/6/02: 23) made reference to ‘Europe the Ostrich’ implying that France and Germany’s opposition to war was based upon the fact that they had buried their heads in the sand and refused to face facts. This angle was also pursued in Parliament, with Lord Weidenfeld [Crossbench] making direct reference to bird associations more generally:

Perhaps we ought to borrow two new symbols from the aviary of political stereotypes and replace the hawk and the dove with the eagle and the ostrich. It is gratifying to know that the right honourable gentleman the Prime Minister belongs to the first species and has refused to stick his head into the sand.

(Hansard, 2002c: 970).

Blair’s alleged refusal to bury his head in the sand is portrayed as a virtue, and can obviously be contrasted with those who do so, although they are not named here. The specific reason for the Prime Minister being an eagle rather than a hawk is however unclear – what is the defining characteristic that makes the distinction necessary? Eagles are significant symbols of the United States and are closely associated with impressive vision (‘eagle eyes’) but then so are hawks (‘hawk eye’). Nevertheless the difference between either of these and an ostrich is clear.

Joseph Nye also wrote of ‘owls’ – mobilising the association between owls and wisdom to argue for the importance of a more intelligent version of a hawk. According to Nye, owls:

would use force to back up the United Nations Security Council Resolutions violated by Saddam Hussein but take the time necessary to develop a broad, multi-national coalition. Now that the US congress has authorised the use of force, the crucial choice is between hawks and owls.

(*Financial Times*, 21/10/02: 29).

The fact that the crucial choice is claimed to be between two violent species means that violence is inevitable – at this point there were no longer any doves to speak of. Military action was an option considered entirely legitimate by almost all those in the US congress.

One also has to assume that circulating somewhere around this highly differentiated aviary, were the media ‘vultures’ eagerly hoping to spot some carrion or other. However, at the time of writing, despite an attempt led by Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price, at utilising a rarely used parliamentary instrument to impeach Tony Blair for gross misconduct, there has been a remarkable lack of high-level political casualties resulting from the invasion, so the vultures’ hunger will have gone largely unfed.

### **10.9. *The Conversion of Colin Powell***

One process observed significantly through avian metaphors, was the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell’s *conversion* from dove to hawk, including the key event of his presentation to the UN in February 2003 (Powell, 2003a).

Rightly or wrongly through much of the build-up to the invasion Powell had been understood, in relative terms, as a dove. He was described as having been the US administrations ‘voice of moderation’ (Jackie Ashley, *The Guardian*, 30/1/03: 21) and as the ‘only reasonable link between the White House and the world’ (Gary Younge, *The Guardian*, 6/2/03: 1). Such understandings of Powell’s position were essential in making it possible for him to have undergone a conversion, ‘transforming’ into a hawk between late January and early February 2003.

There is another noteworthy dimension to his UN presentation. In advance it was largely billed with the assistance of another historical analogy – Adlai Stevenson’s dramatic presentation to the UN Security Council (25/10/62) utilising 26 black and white aerial photographs of Soviet nuclear missiles installed in Cuba, and according to Woodward’s (2004: 291) account, the US administration

had hoped for Powell's 'Adlai Stevenson moment' to make a similar impact (also see Kampfner, 2004: 269; Bamford, 2004: 367).

Press responses to the presentation, now understood as containing some highly questionable and discredited evidence, varied in their portrayal of its significance. Some engaged in an interrogation of the validity of the Adlai Stevenson analogy. For example, Julian Borger (*Guardian*, 6/2/03: 6) cited Arthur Schlesinger as stating that Powell 'did not even come close' to Stevenson's impact.

More important than this assessment of validity was the way that the presentation's impact was connected to Powell's 'previous identity' as a dove, and constituted a conversion. For instance, speaking on BBC's *Question Time* the following day (6/2/03) Andrew Pierce described the presentation as Powell's conversion from dove to hawk, by suggesting it represented him 'growing talons'.

Moreover, it was depicted, by those sympathetic, as:

an extraordinary event [...] the fact that the case against Saddam Hussein was being made by the leading dove in the Bush Administration was a powerful reminder that Baghdad has been given ample time to demonstrate compliance with the UN.

(Editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6/2/03: 25).

Again we are here in the realms of time and patience as well as the imputation of determinate agency to Saddam Hussein (or metonymically Baghdad) and the question of his compliance. Since Powell had previously been observed as the US administration's leading dove, this was all the more 'powerful'.

There was a high degree of consensus amongst those positively disposed to invasion regarding the power of Powell's presentation, and its source. According to Christopher Hitchens: 'Colin Powell's words carry more weight coming as they do from a former sceptic' (*Daily Mirror*, 6/2/03: 7). Charles Moore also claimed that: 'Precisely because he appears to have the zeal of the convert, Mr Powell was the right man for the job' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 6/2/03: 24), and Tim Reid

advanced the more general claim that: 'Sometimes it takes a dove to make the best case for war' (*The Times*, 6/2/03: 16).

The contrastive significance of Powell's recently preceding 'communicative career' – that he was understood as a relative dove on Iraq – was absolutely key to the question of his credibility in this event, and the 'power' of what he said. According to Woodward's (2004: 291) insider account this was an explicit part of the thought process that went into having him give the presentation: 'to have maximum credibility, it would be best to go counter to type and everyone knew that Powell was soft on Iraq, that he was the one who didn't want to go.'

It is of course possible to query the authenticity of Powell's alleged conversion. We could question the description of Powell as a dove in the first instance. Was he some sort of sleeper, acquiring credibility throughout the whole process so that he could cash this in on the administration's behalf at some later date? Such possibilities take us into the realm of conspiracy theories. If we do not wish to accept that a radical transformation occurred then it seems more likely that he was being a good soldier and simply doing the job asked of him, whether he completely believed what he was saying or not.

Regardless of the answer to such questions, it is the credibility pursued and observed by the contrast between his previous communicative career (accepted as not a warmonger) and the more pro-war aspects of his presentation that are supposed to generate persuasive force for what he said: as someone who was previously observed as *not a warmonger*, he must have legitimate and credible reasons for his advocacy of war.



## ***11. Supporting the Troops Once Battle***

### ***Commences***

[T]he anti-war movement was morally disarmed from the very moment our soldiers first went into action. How could anyone oppose the war without standing accused of traitorously failing to back our soldiers?

(Correlli Barnett, *Daily Mail*, 29/5/03: 12).

As noted in the review of literature, a pressure to state support for the troops was evident in the First Gulf War, and a similar phenomenon was also present in the more recent 'Iraq crisis'. A drive towards some form of moral consensus on this issue can be observed as the inevitability of war became apparent. By the start of March 2003, as the build up to war reached its climax, even those who had consistently opposed war started praising the British armed forces, and began to engage in discursive work so as to reconcile their previous anti-war stance with support for the Armed Forces so as to avoid strong moral condemnation.

#### ***11.1. Critique Must Cease***

The explicit call to support was, unsurprisingly, issued most strongly by those in favour of military action. A demand for ceasing opposition because of the 'need' to support the troops was particularly prevalent in the pages of *The Daily Telegraph*:

[T]he impending hostilities must call an end to the debate about the rights and wrongs of war. Now that British forces are going into action, the nation must and will unite behind them, just as it has always done, irrespective of political allegiance. Nobody is called on to make a greater sacrifice than to die for his country, and the only appropriate responses from those who do not have risk their lives are gratitude and awe.

(Editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 20/3/03: 25).

The modalities and moralities at work here are quite obvious. The passage is concerned with what *must* be the case, and opposing views are portrayed as inappropriate. There must be a moratorium on dissent, and unity in ‘gratitude and awe’ is the *only* legitimate option.

Another example of this kind of moral and emotional shepherding, gives a more practical reason for the need to cease criticising the military action – the troops’ morale. An article by Martin Bentham cited Lt Colonel Hugh Blackman, commander of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards as saying: ‘[T]he last thing a soldier needs while being sniped at from the front is to be sniped at from behind by the armchair lancers [...]’ (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 16/3/03: 6). Here it is less directly the morality of critique as such, as much its effect upon soldiers that is at stake. Critics are metaphorically associated with the ‘enemy’ in that their practice ‘sniping’ is the same – both are snipers. Even worse, the critics are doing it from behind – something commonly associated with cowardice.

## 11.2. *Stressing Support*

The circulation of such accusations and the associated condemnation creates a potential problem for critics of the war, apparently inciting declarations of support, which can not go unstated. This is not to suggest that statements of support are sufficient to avoid condemnation, but that if support goes unsaid, then the likelihood of condemnation may increase – since failure to state support leads to the presumption of its absence.

Below is an example articulating this ‘compulsion’ to support the troops, describing its influence upon the timing of Tom Utley’s interventions in the debate:

Until now, I have avoiding [*sic*] airing my reservations about the threatened war against Iraq for three reasons: my ignorance of Middle Eastern politics; my extreme reluctance to side with the sort of people who rant against America in the *Guardian* and, above all, the ever-growing evidence that Mr Bush’s threats were bringing Saddam to heel. I have not

wanted to say anything that might comfort a dictator, or give the slightest credence to the thought that Western democracies have no stomach for war.

*I air my reservations now because this may be my last chance before the troops go in – and I am not going to say a word against the war once our forces start risking their lives.*

*(The Daily Telegraph, 18/1/03: 26, emphasis added).*

This again illustrates the contrastive logic of the foil, with Utey disclaiming any association with particular people on the same 'side' of the debate as him – those who 'rant against America in the *Guardian*'. He claims that his airing of reservations is timed to allow him to have said it before the troops are in action, at which time he will feel the need to stay silent. The fact that the troops were going to be 'risking their lives' is enough to require his silence.

Newspapers that had been against the war also contributed to the emerging consensus about the need to support the troops, directly positioning themselves inside it. As may have been expected, they often did so via processes of disclaiming which also advocated and identified space for their legitimate dissent.

In an article exploring how those papers campaigning against the war would face a problem once it was underway, Roy Greenslade cited Piers Morgan, then editor of the *Daily Mirror* as saying that: 'There is no contradiction in being openly supportive of the troops on the ground and opposing the fact that they were deployed by this government' (*The Guardian: Media Supplement*, 17/3/03: 2), attempting to problematise what are assumed to be contradictions between positions taken by his paper. Editorials were a prominent site for this sort of (re)positioning, and the *Daily Mirror* was especially noticeable for repetition of such assertions. This is far from surprising given the amount of its political capital that was invested in the campaign against the war, and also its history. It could not afford to change its mind about the conflict, but neither could it afford to be portrayed as unsupportive of the troops as it had been during the Falklands war.

Below are three editorial contributions involving various accommodations with the notion that the troops must be supported:

So now we go to war. A war without international support, or the backing of the British public.

A lot of people have pondered on how the Daily Mirror will treat our servicemen and women once the first bomb is dropped.

How can we possibly support them when we are so opposed to the war, they ask?

The answer is a simple one. We are completely behind our British armed services, as we always have been. [...]

Our forces are well aware of the furore back home, and of the sense of disquiet and anger from many British people at this decision to go to war.

It is unsettling for them, distracting.

We understand that. And we know that many of them feel equally uneasy about why this war is being waged.

**But they need to also understand very clearly that once that first bomb is detonated, the Daily Mirror unequivocally supports them. [...]**

Saddam Hussein is not the target of our sympathy and never would be [...]

But the Iraqi people are.

(Voice of the Daily Mirror, *Daily Mirror*, 18/3/03: 2, original emphasis).

Politicians across the political spectrum are united in the conviction that the time has come 'to support our troops'. This newspaper agrees, and fervently hopes for a swift conclusion with as few casualties on both sides as is possible in war. But that does not mean we should not debate how the fighting is about to be conducted.

(Editorial, *The Independent*, 20/3/03: 18).

British marines and Paras led the attack against Iraqi troops.

Their courage, spirit and professionalism was praised by Mr Blair and we agreed with every word he said about them.

But it is not in our view acceptable to use the troops as an excuse for the country to "unite" behind this war.

(Voice of the Daily Mirror, *Daily Mirror*, 21/3/03: 8, original emphasis).

As in previous chapters, we can see these as interventions in the order of discourse, aiming to disrupt assumed relationships, and protecting the legitimacy of specific positions, again often pursued by the use of

contrastive conjunctions such as 'but'. A variety of quite subtle distinctions are drawn in pursuit of locations that are not to be subject to the moral condemnation implied by a refusal to support the troops. *The Independent* editorial still wants to retain the right to critique the conduct of the fighting, and the earlier quotation from Piers Morgan distinguishes between 'the troops' and 'their deployment' as separate issues on which one can position oneself differently without inconsistency.

Another means of attempting to gain such protection was the identification of the morally coercive form of such a process, and therefore a rendering of that process itself as morally problematic – an attempt at reflexively shifting the discursive terrain. For example:

In recent weeks one of the most hatefully unfair barbs aimed at those who urged a policy of delay and containment has been that we are 'disloyal' to the British servicemen and women on the front line. It is worse than the equally ridiculous accusation that we 'back Saddam'; it is an echo of the infantile way that *The Sun* accused the *Daily Mirror* of 'treachery' in the Falklands conflict. Once troops are being deployed, so that argument runs, there can be no more quibbling [...]

So my despised and derided fellow-peaceniks, take heart. We didn't want this, we didn't vote for it, we dread it, but it is still all right to raise a hand in salute and blessing to the poor bloody infantry, and the rest.

(Libby Purves, *The Times*, 18/3/03: 20).

Purves identifies the source of one of the *Mirror's* problems – *The Sun's* accusations of treachery in the context of past wars, and also describes as unfair the circulation of the 'pro-Saddam' accusations which I have mentioned elsewhere. She also notes the arguments that there should be a moratorium on criticism once the troops are in action. Interestingly, her arguments are addressed to those on the same side as her, as a type of in-group directed justification for support of the armed forces. She is arguing that it is okay for those who were, like her, against the war to express such support – they should not feel that they can not. The assumption underpinning this is that they would have wanted to do this (express support) but would have felt that they

could not, and that they would have felt inconsistent if they had done so. Of course, this does not admit the possibility that people might not wish to express such support, and therefore leaves unresolved the question of how those against war who did not want to express such support could position themselves. Such people are not acknowledged.

Another example that implicitly addresses the existence of those not wanting to express support, directly invoking the notion of positioning, comes from Jonathan Freedland:

In these days of anxiety and fear, where should those who have opposed this war put themselves? [...] *For some, the start of war will mean an end to the anti-war campaign. For them, to do anything less would be to undermine our armed forces just as they place themselves in harm's way. But this is one of those clichés of political protocol that makes little logical sense [...]*

Supporting the troops and hoping for victory: many in the anti-war camp will fear all this sounds too much like giving up. And the pressure to buckle will be immense: the drop in anti-war sentiment recorded in yesterday's Guardian poll suggests it's already working its magic [...]

[W]e should be prepared now for what the pro-war camp will say [...]

[W]e did not question this war because we believed Saddam was a cuddly grandpa: we knew the depths of his depravity. Our doubts resided elsewhere.

*(The Guardian, 19/3/03: 23, emphasis added).*

Here we have a restatement that dissent was not the product of naivety about Saddam Hussein. This follows an identification of the moral and emotional pressure brought to bear on dissenters as troops were being deployed, including recognition of the concern about 'undermining' them, and some speculation about how this was likely to reduce the quantity of people willing to dissent. Despite claiming that it is likely to be successful, Freedland claims that the 'cliché' about the need to support the troops 'makes little logical sense'. Although I am not directly assessing the question of success, as a strategy of resistance, identification of the process in this way would

seem unlikely to be a sufficient condition for robbing it of its apparent power.

Another intervention comes from critic Natasha Walter:

The sense that it might be traitorous not to support British soldiers who are facing death may also bring down the number of people who are prepared to protest physically on the streets.

*Even commentators who were once virulently against the war are now willing to tell us how much they sympathise with our courageous soldiers.*

Their innocence and vulnerability is constantly emphasised [...]

[T]his pragmatic desire for a quick victory rather than a bloody, drawn out struggle doesn't mean it is necessary to idealise these men who are fighting this unjust war. In fact, it is vital that we do not now start to blur reality by idealising them.

*(The Independent, 20/3/03: 19, emphasis added).*

Walter recognises the effectiveness of the moral pressure requiring support of the troops, and its influence upon many previously against the invasion. She locates this in the stress placed upon both their innocence and vulnerability, and the way that this results in their elevation and valorisation.

Many other arguments revolving around these issues attempted to problematise the moral pressure by identifying it and making claims about its unfairness. Below are two examples that try to do this in slightly different ways:

The standard formula is that, now the fighting has started, we have to forget our misgivings and back 'our boys'.

But the argument that critics must now shut up is too easy at a time when there are no easy answers. An unwise or unjust war does not become wise or just merely because it is underway.

*(Andrew Alexander, Daily Mail, 21/3/03: 28).*

What remains clear is that this war is wrong. The fact that it has started and taken on its own unstoppable momentum is not enough to abandon principled and reasoned objections to waging it in the first place. It is fashionable to accuse those who oppose the war of being unpatriotic, and to argue that now the conflict has started we should rally around 'our

boys'. But we have never been in dispute with the troops who are courageously carrying out orders. Our concerns are with the political leaders who have sent them to the Gulf in the first place.

(Editorial, *The Independent on Sunday*, 23/3/03: 26).

The references in both these examples to the soldiers as '*our* boys', even when ironised with quotation marks, clearly relate to the notion of 'national deixis' (Billig, 1995) which was mentioned in my literature review – the 'us' in mind certainly being a national one. Alexander's contribution negatively portrays the imperative to support the troops as 'formulaic' and 'too easy' – it is unsurprising, and its widespread availability should undermine its 'currency' (it is not scarce enough to be valuable). Alexander also tries to retain the possibility of a war underway being 'wrong' despite the existence of the process shepherding people towards it being automatically 'right' once underway. Resistance to the gravitational pull towards support is portrayed as legitimate, via the assertion that whether or not a war is underway does not affect its legitimacy.

Similarly, the editorial from *The Independent* asserts that the war is wrong, despite having begun – its 'momentum' is not a sufficient condition to require removal of objections existing beforehand. It also describes the emerging consensus of support dismissively as 'fashionable', and draws a distinction between the various 'objects' of criticism and respect. The paper claims to have 'never been in dispute with the troops', but only with the people sending them to war. Yet again, the troops are positively valued – indeed they are doing their job 'courageously' – despite the war being valued negatively.

Some other opponents of the war manifested their concerns for the troops in a rather different way, echoing one approach from 1991 (Kellner, 1992: 252), claiming that their support for the troops required a different conclusion:

It is humbug for Mr [Charles] Kennedy to turn round and pretend and he supports it merely because it has started and our troops are involved. If



you really want to support our boys, the truly patriotic course is to call for them to be removed speedily from the sands of Mesopotamia to the shores of Blighty [...]

(Alan Watkins, *The Independent on Sunday*, 16/3/03: 25).

Stressing that no anger was aimed at troops fighting in Iraq, Mr Murray [Andrew – Chairman of Stop the War Coalition] said: ‘We want them home safe and we want them home now.’

(Justine Smith and Stephen Moyes, *Daily Mirror*, 22/3/03: 14).

The first of these two examples locates the author in a position of contrast with that of the Liberal Democrats, and therefore with many others who were previously critical of the build up to war. Watkins argues that it is not sufficient to move to a supportive position, and that the most supportive response would be to request the troops be withdrawn and bring them home. The principle is the same in the second example.

This strategy of claiming that the most supportive position was to want the withdrawal of the troops received some particularly violent criticism. With characteristic lack of moderation, Julie Burchill, who supported invasion, wrote the following:

One of the creepiest contortions of the anti-war appeasers was how, once we were finally out there and even the most anti-war papers suggested that it might be best to put our differences aside and support our fighting men, a bunch of self-righteous tossers refused even to be this generous, and prissed that *their* way of supporting our soldiers was campaigning for them to be ‘brought home’.

(*The Guardian: Weekend*, 19/4/03: 5, original emphasis).

Obviously creepy contortions, self-righteous tossers and prissing are not morally ambiguous! Burchill suggests that calling for withdrawal was self-righteous, and therefore an act of positioning deserving condemnation. This reflexivity about reflexivity represents a refolding of the process of accusation in so far as the technique utilised to avoid condemnation *can* itself be rendered morally dubious (arguably similar to the way that saying ‘I am not a racist but’ has become so).

### 11.3. *Parliamentary Accusation*

These various phenomena were not only present in the press coverage, but were also problematic for various participants in parliamentary debates, especially in those immediately preceding war (18/3/03).

‘Pro-war’ contributions were often aimed at associating those against the war with a lack of support for the troops:

Whatever one feels – and many, as I do, will consider that their position on tyranny and terrorism has been systematically misrepresented – one will recognise that our first responsibility is to our armed services. *Can anyone who claims to support our forces leave them to face the enemy while casting doubt on what they are being asked to do?*

(Lord Maginnis of Drumglas [Ulster Unionist], Hansard, 2003e: 175, emphasis added).

Here, the difficulty involved in doubting the validity of the war and simultaneously claiming to support the troops is identified via a ‘rhetorical question’ which associates doubt about the troops’ task and the absence of support – if you question their task, then your support is questionable.

Another highly personalised attempt at persuasion came from Gary Streeter [Labour]:

My family is experiencing its first taste of the personal agony of war. Our daughter married a fine young trooper in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Tank Regiment only two and a half months ago. She remains by the television, constantly awaiting news of the conflict. However, she is surrounded by people in her university – we Streeters marry young – who demonstrate against what her husband is risking his life to do. That does not help. I therefore implore those outside who are planning their protests, marches and placards to think, once battle is engaged, of the thousands of troops who risk their lives and of their families at home. I ask people to show some common humanity and postpone their political protests until the conflict is over.

(Hansard, 2003d: 874).

The references to ‘family’ and ‘marriage’ appeal to common values (indeed, explicitly constituting an appeal to ‘common humanity’). The account is personalised by concerning specific individuals – people with social roles with which everyone is supposedly familiar such as daughters, husbands etc – and these are issues which the protesters are asked to confront. They are asked to think about and feel empathy for the families that they are affecting, and the allegedly negative consequences of their protest are supposed to cause them to desist whilst war is conducted. Indeed, their willingness to desist (or their unwillingness to do so) will be an indication of their ‘common humanity’ (or its absence). This is a good example of the sort of utterance with which it is difficult to engage without concessions of some sort – the claim that you bear the troops or their families no ill will, or a separation of the war and those taking part. To engage with it head on, without softening of some sort may put the perception of your ‘common humanity’ in jeopardy, or at the very least may see you perceived as ‘cold’. It is possible to see my treatment of Streeter’s speech in this way – my focus on its strategic dimensions, may be interpreted as unfeeling or as questioning his sincerity. However, as I have disclaimed several times previously, analytically, the sincerity of the contributions is not paramount.

Below is another example, calling for careful talk from opponents to the war. This example is slightly different from those questioning the support of those against war; instead, it questions the expressions of support they were giving:

Perhaps I may express the hope that, now the decision to go to war has been taken, everyone will take great care over what they say about the morality, legitimacy and wisdom of that decision, whatever strong views they may hold. *A certain amount of the usual words have been spoken how firmly we are behind our Armed Forces, and of course it is customary to make those remarks in a debate of this kind. But sometimes I wonder how much deep thinking and sincerity lie behind those sentiments [...]*

I do not necessarily suppose that when those decisions have been taken, people will change their minds. But I would hope, at the least, before

people express their doubts or demonstrate about the rightness of those decisions, that they would try to put themselves into the minds of those now waiting in the desert [...]

(Lord Chalfont [Conservative], Hansard, 2003e: 197-8, emphasis added).

Lord Chalfont calls for empathy from opponents of war for the soldiers being deployed, and identifies the apparently formulaic nature of the expressions of support made by those against war – ‘the usual words’ which are ‘customary’. He portrays such protestations of support for the troops as cynical and disingenuous. Here we have the re-entry of themes within themes, and the complex form of the debate illustrated. It is almost impossible to decide whether or not this observation relates directly to another specific contribution to the debate or whether it is more nebulous in reference, but there are clearly some examples with which it resonates better than others – those apparently made in response to the moral pressure to express support for the troops once battle commences. Similar to Burchill’s contribution above, it attempts to contain those who were able to sidestep a previous form of containment – a new obstacle is erected to make difficult the movement of those critics able to negotiate the earlier obstacle.

#### ***11.4. Stressing Parliamentary Support***

One of the preconditions of Chalfont’s contribution is the presence of identifiable expressions of support for the troops from those opposing war. Perhaps the most collective of these in the context of the UK Parliament occurred in the debate in the House of Commons over whether or not British troops should take part. An amendment to the motion being debated, proposed by those against the war, actually included explicit praise for the armed forces, and in so doing admitted the likelihood of its own failure. The amendment, read by Peter Kilfoyle, went as follows:

[...] the case for war has not yet been established, especially given the absence of specific United Nations authorisation; but, in the event that

hostilities do commence [this House] pledges its total support for the British forces engaged in the Middle East, expresses its admiration for their courage, skill and devotion to duty, and hopes that their tasks will be swiftly concluded with minimal casualties on all sides.

(Hansard, 2003d: 779).

This was widely seen as an attempt at the proponents having their cake *and* eating it – simultaneously criticising the prospect of war and praising those who would conduct it. In comparison with much of the other disclaiming and self-positioning going on, it reads rather clumsily. It was designed to prevent war occurring, but also detailed what the proponents hoped for if war occurred. At that stage it is arguable that fatalism was appropriate regarding the possibility of preventing military action, but stating your possible future orientation to an event occurring as part of the attempt at preventing it seems a rather strange approach. The clumsiness of the inclusion of praise and support for the troops implies that it was expressed more because it was somehow felt to be *necessary* – its absence would have been problematic – than because it was an integral element in the motion for procedural reasons. It would be possible to view this as rather cynical, however, that would require us to ignore the pressure circulating which demanded statements of support, and the likely consequences of their observed absence. The presence of such words can be explained, in part, as necessary in the face of the circulating idea that questioning the war meant not supporting the troops, and that this was highly morally problematic.

Other ways of engaging with this pressure were evident. Below are two different examples of utterances attempting to do so:

I am not persuaded for one moment by the ridiculous proposition that, because our troops may be employed, it is wrong for us to argue against their being deployed. This is the only opportunity that we have to make that point. Once the troops are in the field, however, I will give them my every support, and I expect every Member so to do.

(David Heath, Hansard, 2003d: 888).

My Lords, we have heard some impassioned speeches this afternoon about the villainy and tyranny of Saddam Hussein. The implication has been that anybody who is against the ultimatum which has been issued and the war against Iraq which is to come must be in favour of this tyrant and supportive of him. That is a gross slander on people who take the view that I do [...]

Those who accuse people like me who are concerned about this war of not wanting to support our Armed Forces are again guilty of slander. That is a downright lie [...]

I, and all those I know who are concerned about the action in Iraq, do support our Armed Forces, and will support them. What we do not support is that they should have been put in a dangerous situation unnecessarily. I wish them well. I wish that they did not have to be there. I hope that they will all return safely.

(Lord Stoddart of Swindon [Independent Labour], Hansard, 2003e: 203-4).

Heath's contribution describes the view that the temporal proximity of war requires an end to criticism as a 'ridiculous proposition'. As in several other examples, there is an implicit separation of the troops themselves and their deployment. Heath also confirms that he will support the troops once they are 'in the field', and therefore an accommodation is reached with the process of accusation. The value of supporting the troops goes unquestioned, and is thereby (re)confirmed, even in a contribution which describes the pressure involved as 'ridiculous'.

Lord Stoddart engages very directly with the accusation, of non-support, labelling it 'slander', and also 'a downright lie'. Like earlier contributions he separates the troops from their deployment so as to enable the two distinct issues to undergo different valuations. In claiming that all opponents of war support the troops, Stoddart also (re)confirms the relevance of support, and leaves little space for those who may wish not to express such support. Therefore, as has been the case with regard to other processes of accusation, his pursuit of legitimacy marginalises other conceivable positions, and is therefore reliant upon their inferiority.

### 11.5. *The Liberal Hermaphrodites?*

Whilst the need to support the troops was problematic for most against war, inciting various forms of discursive work, in Britain it was intensely problematic for the Liberal Democrats, whose policy was consistently anti-war. The party's movement towards expressing support for the troops whilst still opposing war was described by Conservative MP Boris Johnson as a 'curious hermaphroditic policy' (Hansard, 2003d: 812), and by 'Government insiders' as them 'trying to ride two horses at once' (in Jean Eaglesham, *Financial Times*, 17/2/03: 4). Much discussion occurred regarding the sense in which they were trying to be two things at once, trying to have their cake and eat it (something of which they are regularly accused).

For example, the then leader of the Conservative Party, Iain Duncan Smith said:

One can argue that further military action by our armed forces would be illegal, or that it should be supported. But *a political party surely cannot simultaneously argue that military action is illegal but should none the less be supported somehow*. Yet that, we gather, is what the Liberal Democrats plan to put as their main case tonight. *What is clear is that one cannot have it both ways; one has to make a decision and lead.*

(Hansard, 2003d: 774, emphasis added).

Interestingly, Duncan Smith makes his criticism of the Liberal Democrats via use of a 'but' and actually seems to acknowledge the potential legitimacy of arguing against the war. However, he contrasts these straightforward for/against positions with the positions of the Lib Democrats who are attempting to 'have it both ways'. Here it is the fact that they do not fit into one of the legitimate positions – they believe the war is illegal but wish to support it – which leads to their alleged incoherence.

From the opposite 'side' of the debate, George Galloway said:

We didn't want this war, they said, it is wrong and illegal, but if it has begun we must support 'our boys'.

But why, if something was wrong and illegal before it was done, should it be any different once it has started?

(Galloway, 2004: 68; also see, *The Guardian*, 2/6/04: 22 ).

Another contribution questioning the coherence of the Liberal Democrats' position comes from Lord Strathclyde:

The [...] thing to set out is the unequivocal support that we offer to our Armed Forces and their families at this time. They need to know that we endorse the cause in which they are being asked to risk their lives. *We have been consistent in that position and will remain so.* I have enormous respect for the wisdom of the noble Baroness, Lady Williams of Crosby, and agree with her on many things. But, like many noble Lords, *I find it hard to fathom the attitude of a party that denounces the legality of a war – right up to the last minute in the debate launched by the noble Lord, Lord Goodhart, last night – and then says that it supports the war when it is fought.* *With utmost respect, I say to the Liberal Democrats that they cannot campaign as an anti-war party on the doorsteps, then proclaim support in the television studios for the troops fighting that illegal war.*

(Hansard, 2003e: 144, emphasis added).

Lord Strathclyde prefaces this with an assertion that there must be no equivocation about support for the troops, and the extent to which the cause in which they are engaged is endorsed, and contrasts the Liberal Democrats' position with the alleged consistency of the Conservative party. He then states respect for Baroness Williams before contrasting this with the position her party has taken regarding the legality of the war, and yet their expression of support for it if it occurs. Again we are dealing with observed inconsistencies and incompatibilities. The complexity was unwelcome, and the problems arising from being observed as trying to be two supposedly contradictory things at once was problematic for a considerable period after the war had begun.

### **11.6. Conclusion**

It is certainly of great interest that observations made of the discursive practices used in the debate themselves re-enter it and are rendered



thematic – elements of the debate becoming part of itself. Techniques used to negotiate legitimacy can themselves subsequently undergo ironisation, and be rendered morally problematic – a process of reflexive refolding.

Generally speaking, the incitement of statements of support for the troops, combined with the production of such statements of support, in pursuit of legitimacy by critics of the war, led to the formation of a moral consensus in which anti-war contributions were pulled into a discursive location advantageous to their opponents. The defensive discursive work required in pursuit of legitimacy operated as a distraction from making criticisms of the impending invasion, as critics had to devote time and effort trying to avoid their enunciations being discounted automatically.

Nevertheless, critics of the war have also made use of the valorisation of the troops, particularly after the end of ‘major combat operations’. For example, in America, Michael Moore (2004) published a collection of letters and e-mails sent to him by US soldiers and their families, most of which were heavily critical of their task.

In Britain use was made the troops’ valorisation throughout the autumn of 2004, especially in relation to the redeployment of the Black Watch regiment. Much coverage of their redeployment, focalised discussion via their families in a manner supporting Foster’s (1999: 43-77) discussions of such familial references in relation to war more generally. Much was made of the families’ ‘anger’ (Shirley English, *The Times*, 19/10/04: 2), ‘outrage’ (Bob Roberts, *Daily Mirror*, 19/10/04: 5) and ‘immense distress’ (Max Hastings, *Daily Mail*, 18/10/04: 11) about what their relatives were being asked to do.

A degree of prominence was afforded the parents of casualties, including Rose Gentle, mother of Gordon, killed in June 2004 (*The Guardian*, 29/9/04: 21), and organisations such as ‘UK Veterans and Families for Peace’ (for example, John Vidal, *The Guardian*, 18/10/04: 4).

In early November 2004, efforts were also made to connect the invasion of Iraq to the Remembrance Day commemorations (and

therefore WWII again), with families of British soldiers killed in Iraq laying a wreath of poppies outside 10 Downing Street and submitting an 'damning letter' signed by ten such parents on November 10<sup>th</sup> (James Chapman, *Daily Mail*, 11/11/04: 1).

Such contributions themselves have constituted considerable moral obstacles for those attempting to retrospectively and retroactively justify the invasion of Iraq. Bereaved parents can not be dismissed as easily as an obviously political opponent. They require very sensitive handling, making them potentially useful in attempts at retrospectively rendering the military action illegitimate.

## ***12. The Infamous ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’***

For as long as I can remember, I’ve had trouble with monsters. When I was very small, adults tried to alleviate the terror by opening the cupboard and shining torches under the bed to prove to me nothing was there. It made things worse, of course, because the monster’s invisibility gave them absolute power. If they couldn’t be seen, they were all the more invincible, and capable of taking on distorted shapes beyond even the wild imagination of a child. Worse than all my fear of seeing them, was my fear of never seeing them, of never being able to look at them hard enough to make them go away.

(Dinski, 1998: 3).

The ‘Iraq crisis’ is likely stimulate scholarly debate across multiple disciplines for decades to come, no aspect more so than the meaning of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (henceforth WMD), and this entire thesis could easily have been devoted to the significance of this phrase, since for those opposed to war, the threat of WMD was the ‘master illusion’ (Pilger, 2002: 9) of the pro-war case.

This chapter departs from those preceding since it is not directly concerned with various accusations directed at contributors to the debate. Instead, the focus is upon the importance of the phrase ‘weapons of mass destruction’. Nevertheless, the approach utilised is very similar, including an examination of the ways in which particular discursive connections are made in contributions to the debate including the moral asymmetries identified in the discursive work undertaken by participants.

The phrase ‘weapons of mass destruction’ is another example of a ‘formulaic phrase’ with respect to issues of recognition, reduction and (re)constitution. It seems to have a particular reductive and yet constructive capacity to enable people to interact as if talking about the same thing even when that is questionable. The phrase also lends itself rather easily to parody – destruction can be variously replaced with deception (Rampton and Stauber, 2003), corruption (Editorial,

*The Daily Telegraph*, 7/10/04: 29), or ‘disappearance’ (Robin Cook, *The Guardian*, 3/12/04: 28) often with delegitimizing intent.

### 12.1. *Definition and Vagueness*

From the way it is used, one could be forgiven for thinking that the phrase WMD had some clearly understood referent. If much closer attention is paid to circulation of the phrase it becomes clear that the ways that WMD are envisaged vary considerably – the phrase is polysemic.

The usual places to look for clarity in definitional matters are official documents, and many such definitions are available, although most of these were provided after the pre-war process of justification.

The House of Commons’ Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) Report into the uses of pre-war intelligence defined WMD as follows:

The term ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’ is generally used to denote nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Within the context of Iraq, it has been used more broadly to cover all weapons programmes proscribed under Resolutions 687 of 1991, including ballistic missiles and other unmanned delivery systems with a range greater than 150 kilometres.

(FAC, 2003: 55).

The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), in its report on the handling of intelligence assessments in the production of the UK Government’s infamous dossier of September 2002 (UK Government, 2002) defined WMD as follows:

WMD covers the procurement, development and production of chemical and biological munitions and nuclear devices – together with their delivery systems, which include ballistic and cruise missiles [...]

However, the same term is used to cover battlefield or tactical munitions including artillery shells with a chemical payload, such as mustard gas, for use against opposing troops.

(ISC, 2003: 3).

The ISC also went on to define WMD *programmes* as meaning that:

people and resources are being allocated under a management structure for either the research and development of a WMD capability or the production of munitions. It does not necessarily mean that WMD munitions have been produced, as only when the capability has been developed can weapons be produced.

(ISC, 2003: 10).

The contrastive importance of the distinction between WMD and 'programmes' will be explored in more detail below.

The Butler Report, also investigating the handling of intelligence followed the ISC's definition of WMD, but also stated that:

we believe that there are problems with the term 'weapons of mass destruction' and with the shorthand 'chemical and biological weapons' (CBW) and 'chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear' (CBRN) weapons.

(Butler *et al.*, 2004: 3).

They also added that the term WMD is: 'used so variously as to confuse rather than enlighten readers' (Butler *et al.*, 2004: 4).

Moreover, the committee went on to echo the FAC and the eventual Iraq Survey Group's Interim Report (ISG, 2004) by explaining that the definition they were using revolved around the things UNSCR 687(1991) required Iraq to abandon: nuclear weapons and their supporting technologies, stocks of chemical and biological weapons and related support facilities and research, as well as ballistic missiles with range exceeding 150km and related facilities.

There is arguably something rather curious and troubling about using Iraq to define WMD – the possibility of a self-fulfilling logic in operation raising questions about inevitability or teleology. Nevertheless, not everyone was willing to accept the legitimacy of those definitions in circulation, especially those opposed to war.

During the public debate, various discursive strategies had been in evidence involving criticism of the way that WMD were discussed by those advocating military action, and negative comments about definitional vagueness were one prominent technique used in the attempt at undermining the case for war, for example claims that its reference is very much observer-dependent:

WMD [is] empty and dishonest as a concept [...] The truth is that 'weapons of mass destruction' is a concept defined by the person using it. 'I like a drink, you are a drunk, he is an alcoholic,' runs the old conjugation. Now there's another: 'We have defence forces, you have dangerous arms, he has weapons of mass destruction.'

(Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Guardian*, 2/5/03: 28).

Simon Tisdall noted the vagueness and asserted the significance of this relativity of application:

This is now a universally understood term, or so you might think. WMD is proliferating, it's deeply frightening, and it's coming to a cinema or tube near you.

Yet totemic WMD is also a reason why civil liberties are everywhere under siege, why military budgets are rising, why your opinion is ignored. In fact, WMD is a vague, non-specific term that can be (and is) used to cover a multitude of supposed sins. Developed countries have their own WMD, of course, but their arsenals are somehow deemed acceptable.

(*The Guardian*, 4/11/03: 24).

Both Britain and the USA have similar weapons, but that is apparently acceptable – something connecting up to a lot of ideas emerging from the first Gulf War in 1991 regarding the way in which the morality of technologies depends upon who possesses them (Askoy and Robins, 1992; Hackett and Zhao, 1994).

Despite controversy regarding what fits into the category, and what counts as evidence of their existence in a specific location, there is a degree of clarity about the moral evaluation of WMD. Despite the lack of agreement on the definition of WMD, in many of the

contributions to the public debate, the absence of doubt about their presence (or absence) in Iraq was nevertheless prominently on display.

## 12.2. *Repeating the Absence of Doubt*

I have already discussed some examples of assertions of certainty in earlier chapters. Such assertions were also made regarding the presence of WMD in Iraq. For example: '[T]here can be no controversy about the evidence that Saddam Hussein has developed and is continuing to develop apace, weapons of mass destruction' (Francis Maude [Conservative], Hansard, 2002b: 52).

There is perhaps a distinction to be drawn between two possibilities – speaking *with* certainty and speaking *to foster it*. Faced with a choice between these two possibilities – that it is possessed and expressed, or performed, I think the emphasis should be on the latter. This type of enunciation is most usefully understood in terms of its interpellatory implications – the way it values and prefers specific subsequent contributions others could make. It is almost like a moral challenge to subsequent speakers to disagree, potentially creating a problem for them, although this 'preference for agreement' is more directly strategic in character than that identified by Pomerantz (1984).

Arguably, the constant performance of certainty raises two suspicions. Firstly, that it is the repetitive implementation of a strategy that is observed as partially successful, and secondly, that each repetition is not a final solution – it is also partially unsuccessful requiring it to be stated again and again. There is always assumed to be some 'failure' as well as 'success' – an automatic gap between partial and total success – which makes saying it once, twice, three times ultimately insufficient in terms of achieving *total* definitional closure.

Another question we can ask is: to what extent is the process of performing certainty self- or other-directed? In a piece discussing Tony Blair, Polly Toynbee skirted this type of issue in relation to his contributions:

As for Tony Blair's veracity, with him there is a wavy line between deception and self-deception. He is so easily carried away by the persuasiveness of his own words and the force of his own arguments that you can hear him mesmerise himself: the truth with him is bound up with extraordinary optimism. There is an almost childish blurring between the wish and the fact: if he says something strongly enough, his words can magic it into truth.

*(The Guardian, 30/5/03: 27).*

It is obvious that Toynbee is partly concerned with 'truthfulness' here and she perhaps underestimates the extent to which all contributors to this debate and others were pursuing the same 'magic' she describes when they spoke.

It is important to realise that not all contributions performed certainty and much hedging also occurred. For example, in his cabinet resignation speech, then outgoing Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook, said: 'Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term – namely no credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target' (Hansard, 2003c: 728).

Cook hedges here whilst claiming that Iraq has no WMD in the sense commonly understood. His reference to common understanding is also an ironisation of the case for war in that it is implying that such understanding is insufficient or misleading – that an inappropriate understanding of the alleged threat had taken hold. It is notable that even a strong opponent of war did not claim outright that no WMD were there (see Lewis and Brookes, 2004: 135 on the rarity of outright denial in the build-up).

Both hedging and certainty were co-present across the entire debate, often from the same source. Despite claims to the contrary regarding its 'evangelical certainty' (Cook, 20003: 221), and all the subsequent controversy over whether it was 'sexed up', the UK Government's (2002) infamous dossier on Iraq's alleged WMD, also



contained much hedging. For example, clear hedging about Iraq's capabilities appear on pages 5, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 41.

This surprising amount of hedging in the infamous dossier was lost in many appropriations of its contents. The day following its publication, perhaps the most simplistic interpretation of the dossier's contents came from *The Sun* (25/9/02: 1) newspaper, which had the full page headline: 'HE'S GOT 'EM.. LET'S GET HIM'. *The Sun* was especially supportive of the Government's line and was arguably more positively disposed towards war, leading to almost every piece of evidence being interpreted in the most strategically useful way in favour of invasion. For example, commenting on the UN inspectors' discovery in January 2003 of some Al Samoud warheads which were prohibited by the resolutions applying to Iraq, Trevor Kavanagh its political editor asserted that this meant that:

Saddam has been caught red-handed.

For all his tricks and lies, Butcher of Baghdad can no longer deny he has weapons of mass destruction [...]

This is bad news for the Labour peaceniks who turned a blind eye to all previous evidence that branded Saddam a risk to world security [...] the wobblers will finally have to fall in behind.

(*The Sun*, 17/1/03: 2).

Long after the declared end of major combat operations, talk of certainty persisted, although it was still mixed in curious ways with hedging techniques. Discussing some of the political problems for Tony Blair generated by the invasion's aftermath, Max Hastings wrote that: 'For Blair to get out of this one unscathed, he needs firm evidence about WMD. This may still be forthcoming. In some form, they certainly existed' (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 17/8/03: 18). Apparently, WMD 'certainly' existed, but only in 'some form'.

Some systematic sociological research has already explored the extent to which certainty about the presence of WMD in Iraq was transmitted through the mass media, claiming that broadcasters tended

to utilise the frameworks provided by the government, and accepting its claims regarding the presence of WMD in Iraq:

[W]e did find some evidence that British broadcasters were sometimes tilted in their assumptions towards a framework promoted by government. When it came to contentious issues such as WMD or the mood of the Iraqi people, we found that, overall, all the main television broadcasters tended to favour the pro-war, government version over more sceptical accounts. So for example, 9 out of 10 references to WMD tended to assume Iraqi capability, while only 1 in 10 cast doubt on it [...] Moreover, despite the mixed reports coming from reporters on the ground, broadcasters were twice as likely to represent the Iraqi people as welcoming the invasion than as suspicious, reserved or hostile.

(Lewis *et al.*, 2004: 25; also see Lewis and Brookes, 2004).

Edwards and Cromwell (2004: 213) also show that even the websites of the two consistently critical UK broadsheets, between 1/1/03 and 6/6/03, included many times the number of references to the existence of WMD than references to former members of the UN inspection teams who were critical of the public case advanced, Rolf Ekeus and Scott Ritter (961-14 for *The Guardian*, and 931-28 in *The Independent*).

The question of whether this (uncritical) circulation of the relevance if not presence of WMD had some direct impact upon the audience is unresolved, and would require engagement the contentious literature on 'media effects' and research methodology beyond that of this project. What matters here is that very little room was apparently left for people to doubt that the issue of WMD was 'at stake' in relation to Iraq and that this shaped the space into which they would have to contribute if they so wished, with assertions that they were not at stake significantly 'dispreferred', i.e., communications were 'required' to link to the significance of WMD somehow.

### 12.3. UNSCR 1441

Following the US government's decision to 'go down the UN route', and after two months of intensive negotiation, UNSCR 1441 (United Nations, 2002: paragraph 2), giving Iraq a 'final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations' was passed unanimously by the UN Security Council.

Even this unanimously passed resolution has been interpreted as highly ambiguous. Critics claimed that: 'The resolution was a masterwork of obfuscation, leaving open the questions of the timetable and of how the council would judge Iraqi compliance' (Burrough *et al.*, 2004: 176). Particularly controversial was the question of whether or not the resolution contained 'traps', making it easy for those so inclined to 'trigger' military action, and disagreement about what would count as a 'material breach' of the resolution.

#### 12.3.1. Triggers, Traps and Tripwires

For those wanting to force Saddam Hussein to comply in disarmament of WMD, it became important to deny that the resolution contained traps that would make it easy for them to trigger war – another dimension of the denial of warmongering.

Those less positively disposed to military action voiced suspicions that the UN process was something not being pursued with commitment, and that the resolution was deliberately designed to fail. There were discussions of:

the well-founded fear that its uncompromising, catch-all terms will be manipulated, sooner rather later, into a mandate for war [...]

[T]here remains good reason to ask whether the resolution, by setting up numerous, over-rigorous and potentially war-triggering tripwires, is not a genuine 'final opportunity' at all and is designed to fail.

(Editorial, *The Guardian*, 7/11/02: 25).

Earlier in the process, Baroness Turner of Camden had claimed that the Bush Administration was: 'intent on making it as difficult as

possible for Iraq to comply' (Hansard, 2002c: 999-1000), and a month before its successful passage, an Editorial in *The Guardian* (3/10/02: 21) had claimed that the US' draft amounted to 'a blueprint for invasion.'

In the face of this sort of criticism about the UN process' authenticity, denial of the presence of triggers or traps was deemed necessary. Jack Straw repeatedly made claims that: 'There are no tripwires or traps in the resolution; it sets out a very clear procedure' (Hansard, 2002d: 49), and Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean asserted that: 'Resolution 1441 gives the Iraqi regime a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations [...] I assure your Lordships that it is not designed to trick or trap the Iraqi regime' (Hansard, 2002e: 861).

Similar to much of the other disclaiming mentioned thus far, such contributions are tied up with questions of legitimacy – were there to be traps and tripwires present then this would be problematic, therefore their presence must be denied.

### **12.3.2. What Constitutes a Material Breach?**

Related to this disclaiming of tripwires, is the question of what would count as evidence of Iraqi violation of the resolution: On what basis could it be agreed that a 'material breach' had occurred? Realistically there was probably very little which would have led to widespread international assent to military action – a spectacular find of long range missiles loaded with chemical weapons perhaps. Given the absence of such evidence during the inspections process, things were much less clear, leading to many interpretative competitions and attempts at controlling how specific activities *should* be understood.

Discursive work in pursuit of controlling the parameters of compliance or its absence were made necessary because the diplomatic process had allowed everyone to think that they had achieved what they wanted, leading to the existence of 'an aura of ambiguity about what will constitute non-compliance' (Lord Weidenfeld [Crossbench]

Hansard, 2002e: 927). As Sir George Young [Conservative] put it on the eve of the invasion:

The traditional skills of diplomacy involve getting people to agree to something by persuading them that it means what they want it to mean, and saying that there is no harm in 'signing up' because the eventuality is remote. All that has come horribly unstuck. There has been too much ambiguity and obfuscation in the process.

(Hansard, 2003d: 824).

Throughout the negotiations, preceding the resolution's passage, one of the main stumbling blocks had been the choice of the word 'and' or 'or' in paragraph four, which reads:

Decides that false statements or omissions in the declarations submitted by Iraq pursuant to this resolution *and* failure by Iraq at any time to comply with, and cooperate fully in the implementation of, this resolution shall constitute a further material breach of Iraq's obligations [...]

(United Nations, 2002; emphasis added).

The difference 'and' makes as distinct from 'or' is that it requires two things rather than one to occur before a material breach could be confirmed – a potentially important change in the evidential basis required for 'serious consequences' to be unleashed.

However, as I have already noted, there was a high degree of controversy over what would count as evidence of compliance (or not), and one of the approaches adopted by those opposed to war was to constantly interrogate the UK government about what they would count as such evidence in advance of its occurrence.

Unwilling to pin themselves down too much, those responding to such questions were rather evasive and vague, even implying that it was somehow inappropriate to ask. According to Tony Blair:

The resolution is certainly predicated on the basis that if there is a breach, there is agreement to act [...]

I think there is international consensus that it is not sensible to tie ourselves down now to every single set of circumstances, that we want to keep some freedom of manoeuvre and that we should keep pressure on Saddam.

(Hansard, 2002d: 43).

Similar attempts at allowing ‘freedom of manoeuvre’ (or ‘wriggle room’) were evident in the Lords: ‘[I]t is never possible to give an exhaustive list of all the behaviours that would be covered [...] It means something significant [...] behaviour that is serious; deliberate and concerted’ (Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Hansard, 2002e: 862). As Lord Howell of Guildford [Conservative] also put it: ‘Someone suggested to me that it was a little like an elephant – it is difficult to describe in the abstract but easy to recognise when one sees it’ (Hansard, 2002e: 867).

For critics, this was problematic because it represented those in favour of the course of action trying to have their cake and eat it. Neil Gerrard [Labour] gave voice to these anxieties:

One of the key problems is that we are being asked in the motion to support the UN, yet at the same time we are being told that the US Government and our Government reserve the right to ignore anything that the UN says if they do not like what the UN decides when it looks at the weapons inspectors’ reports [...]

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot say ‘You must support the UN’ and at the same time say, ‘We reserve the right to do whatever we want if we do not like what the UN decides.’

(Hansard, 2002d: 78).

Concern was also voiced regarding how rigidly the US administration would try to enforce their conception of compliance. Lord Rea [Labour], for example, claimed that they: ‘are likely to try to use even a minor infringement of UNMOVIC’s protocol as a *casus belli*’ (Hansard, 2002e: 940). Earlier on in the same debate, Lord King of Bridgwater [Conservative] had speculated upon the importance of a distinction between ‘partial success’ and ‘failure’:

If, as I expect, the inspection regime is able to report only partial success in the form of the elimination of some weapons but not others, should this automatically be the occasion for war? I say that it should not [...] I do not believe that partial success would constitute failure.

(Hansard, 2002e: 918).

He suspected, however, that the US administration would see the distinction as invalid, and that partial success, equating with failure, would also constitute a material breach. As it turns out, this is probably a fairly good summary of what subsequently took place!

The underlying concern on the part of those averse to military action was that, despite the denial of the presence of traps in the resolution, it was made almost impossible for Iraq to comply – not just difficult, but that any compliance was dismissed as ‘a cynical trick and playing games’ (Tam Dalyell in Andrew Brice, *The Independent*, 3/3/03: 1). Whatever Iraq did it was either non-compliance or cynicism – the distinction used to observe things did not really include compliance – there was no room for the possibility of what was requested, or no likelihood it would have been acknowledged at all. Had the criteria been specified, Iraq could have lived up to them!

#### **12.4. *The Correct Role of the Inspectors***

One issue that became increasingly important as the UN inspections progressed was the ‘correct’ role of the inspectors. A key distinction was drawn between what they were supposed (and supposed not) to be doing – the inspection process as one of *detection* or *verification*.

Contributions drawing this distinction were spread quite liberally throughout the public debate in Britain and elsewhere in the months immediately prior to invasion, and were notably prominent towards the end of January 2003, including in President Bush’s State of the Union Address:

The 108 U.N. inspectors were sent to conduct – were not sent to conduct a scavenger hunt for hidden materials across a country the size of California. The job of the inspectors is to verify that Iraq’s regime is disarming. It is

up to Iraq to show exactly where it is hiding its banned weapons, lay those weapons out for the world to see, and destroy them as directed. Nothing like this has happened.

(Bush, 2003a).

Not all accounts involved this type of double movement, but for those involved in making the case for war, the importance of the inspectors not being detectives was clear. For example the UK Government (2003: 2) asserted that: 'Inspectors are not a detective agency', and in the parliamentary debate on the eve of war, Dr Julian Lewis [Conservative] also stated that: '[I]t is not the inspectors' job to go on doing what they have been doing over the last few weeks in acting as detectives' (Hansard, 2003d: 834; also see Powell, 2003a).

In such accounts, the specific thing that the inspectors 'are' supposed to be is not necessarily mentioned. In trying to establish this, it is obviously more useful to look at those contributions stating both what is and is not the case more directly. In such contributions, the correct role is regularly claimed as one of verification in direct contrast to that of detection. For example: 'The inspectors' role is not one of detectives hunting for clues, but one of verifying Iraqi compliance' (Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Hansard, 2003b: 371). Here we see the familiar use of a contrastive conjunction connecting two interrelated movements in some ontological gerrymandering – what is and is not the case. Here the discursive work does not directly concern some 'identity' that Symons tries to avoid, but relates to her characterisation of the understanding that *should* be made of the inspections process. The difference between these two roles has important implications for what is expected of the inspectors, and the Iraqi regime.

It was not only those positively disposed towards war drawing this distinction. For example, Hans Blix, then head of UNMOVIC, drew the distinction in one of his presentations to the UN on the progress of the inspections:



Resolution 687 (1991), like the subsequent resolutions I shall refer to, required cooperation by Iraq but such was often withheld or given grudgingly. Unlike South Africa, which decided on its own to eliminate its nuclear weapons and welcomed inspections as a means of creating confidence in its disarmament, Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance – not even today – of the disarmament, which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace.

As we know, the twin operation ‘declare and verify’, which was prescribed in resolution 687 (1991), too often turned into a game of ‘hide and seek’.

(Blix, 2003).

Later he added that: ‘Paragraph 9 of resolution 1441 (2002) states that this cooperation shall be “active”. It is not enough to open doors. Inspection is not a game of ‘catch as catch can’. Rather [...] it is a process of verification for the purpose of creating confidence’ (Blix, 2003).

It is possible that some of the resistance to the war resulted in part from the UK government failing to successfully establish ‘verification’ as the preferred understanding of the inspections process in advance of that process beginning. Verification implies a less proactive set of activities on the part of the inspectors – not ‘hide and seek’ or a ‘scavenger hunt’ and fosters different expectations about the results of those activities, which can not be conducted unilaterally. In contrast, defining the situation as one of ‘detection’ fosters the expectation that a search is on, and that something will be found. The significance of this differential understanding is, of course, also interconnected with differences in the understandings of what WMD are, or what would count as evidence of their existence.

What is important is that much of this discursive work in the direction of verification as the inspectors’ correct role, was happening once inspection was underway. It is possible to conclude that it was to some extent in response to the problems resulting from detection coming to define the public debate.

The sense in which the definition of the situation had not been closed down in advance is attested to by Lord King of Bridgwater, speaking in Parliament in late February: ‘Only recently have we received the obvious and necessary clarification that the inspectors’ role is as verifiers, not detectives’ (Hansard, 2003b: 367). He not only draws the distinction between detectives and verifiers, and indicates a preference for one, but also claims that the clarity this distinction brings is something new.

This observation about newness does not mean that the distinction was not drawn earlier on in the process, or long before (Butler, 2000: 19). Indeed, in his statement made shortly after the successful passage of UNSCR 1441, and before the inspections resumed, Tony Blair implied it:

The obligation is to co-operate. It is not a game of hide and seek, where the inspectors try their best to find the weapons and Saddam does his best to conceal them.

The duty of co-operation means not just access but information. Failure to be open and honest in helping the inspectors do their work is every bit as much a breach as failure to allow access to sites.

(Blair, 2002).

However, despite this early mention, this is perhaps one time that the craft of spin was not implemented successfully – the importance of ‘verification’ was not circulated effectively and had not penetrated and framed the whole debate in advance. It was this failure that made necessary a certain amount of ‘remedial’ and retroactive discursive work regarding the role of the inspectors.

For those expecting verification (or perhaps more accurately, seeing the inspectors’ role as one of verification, but not necessarily expecting it to occur) what was key were the activities of the Iraqi regime – as Blair put it, their ‘obligation’. Therefore, writing after the conclusion of major combat operations, and asserting the war’s legality despite the absence of WMD findings, it was possible for Christopher Greenwood to claim that:

the fact that no 'smoking gun' has yet been discovered in Iraq does not affect the legal basis for the action. The Security Council resolutions make it clear that the critical question was not whether Iraq might possess a prohibited weapon capable of immediate use. Rather, what the council consistently required was that the inspectors it appointed be able to certify that all such weapons had gone and that there were no programmes in place by which new ones could be created. Iraq was required to take positive steps, of disclosure and co-operation, as part of this process. In the event, Iraq had still not complied after 12 years.

*(The Times, 22/10/03: 22).*

The significance of the obligations allegedly placed upon Iraq to engage in such 'disclosure and co-operation' can not be underestimated, and the following section looks at some of the ways in which Iraqi compliance (or not) was understood.

### ***12.5. The Onus and the Burden of Proof***

Much discussion of the UN inspections process concerned the obligations placed upon Iraq, and those in favour of pursuing military action constantly stressed that the combined effects of UNSCR 1441 and previous resolutions placed the onus upon Iraq to cooperate and demonstrate its compliance.

Over a month before passage of 1441, Jack Straw placed emphasis upon this issue: 'Above all, the responsibility for ensuring a peaceful resolution of the issue of disarming Iraq rests with Saddam Hussein alone' (Hansard, 2002b: 27). The significance of such utterances for framing notions of responsibility has already been noted in the section on 'Warmongering', and it is clear that the onus is placed upon Hussein to act in particular ways: 'Above all, it is not up to Dr Blix and Dr El Baradei to find them. It is up to Saddam Hussein to give them up. He has not' (Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Hansard, 2003b: 246).

The question of how cooperation was to be judged or assessed was obviously an important dimension of the public debate in Britain,

and was also an acute concern for the US administration. Stress was placed upon the relevance of previous successful disarmament processes as a point of comparison with Iraq – non-cooperation being defined by its difference from cooperation.

In January 2003 the White House published a document titled *What Does Disarmament Look Like?* outlining three elements of voluntary disarmament:

The decision to disarm is made at the highest political level;

The regime puts in place national initiatives to dismantle weapons and infrastructure; and

The regime fully cooperates with international efforts to implement and verify disarmament; its behavior is transparent, not secretive.

(White House, 2003: 1).

It held up examples – in South Africa, Ukraine and Kazakhstan – claiming that Iraq was failing to live up to those standards, and that its behaviour contrasted sharply with them (White House, 2003: 3).

Repeating and restating these themes, then US National Security Advisor, Condoleeza Rice produced a similar statement regarding voluntary disarmament:

There is no mystery to voluntary disarmament. Countries that decide to disarm lead inspectors to weapons and production sites, answer questions before they are asked, state publicly and often the intention to disarm and urge their citizens to cooperate. The world knows from examples set by South Africa, Ukraine and Kazakhstan what it looks like when a government decides that it will cooperatively give up its weapons of mass destruction. The critical common elements of these efforts include a high-level political commitment to disarm, national initiatives to dismantle weapons programs, and full cooperation and transparency [...]

Iraq's behaviour could not offer a starker contrast.

(Rice, 2003).

Later as the pressure for an invasion intensified, Colin Powell stated similar themes in a speech to the Center for Strategic Studies:

Has Saddam Hussein made a strategic political decision to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions [...]

There is no other question. Everything else is secondary or tertiary [...]

Nothing we have seen since the passage of 1441 indicates that Saddam Hussein has taken a strategic and political decision to disarm; moreover, nothing indicates that the Iraqi regime has decided to actively, unconditionally and immediately cooperate with the inspectors [...]

Process is not performance. Concessions are not compliance [...]

(Powell, 2003b).

Later he invoked Ukraine and South Africa again as a point of comparison with Iraq:

What would it look like in Iraq? Instead of letting the inspectors grope for answers in the dark, Iraq would bring all of its documents out and all of its scientists into the light to answer the outstanding questions. Indeed, Iraq would be besieging the inspectors with information. Mobile labs would be driven up and parked outside of UNNMOVIC headquarters. All of the missiles of the al Samoud variety would be destroyed immediately. They wouldn't be hesitating. They would go and find the infrastructure for these missiles and what machinery they have hidden to produce more and make them available for destruction.

(Powell, 2003b).

Again, the centrality of a 'strategic decision' to disarm is emphasised, as is the requirement of considerable activity on Iraq's part.

Many contributions implied that if disarmament was underway the world would have been able to tell, and such ideas were stressed by George W. Bush on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2003. First in a press conference he stated that: 'If the Iraqi regime were disarming, we would know it, because we would see it. Iraq's weapons would be presented to inspectors, and the world would witness their destruction' (Bush, 2003b). Later he directly echoed Colin Powell stating that: 'concessions are not compliance' (Bush, 2003c), implying that this was a strategically selected sound-bite.

All of these contributions mobilise some version of the detection/verification distinction, and are all concerned with trying to control what is and is not the case in this context – limiting what is ‘relevant’, and trying to control what counts as evidence with regard to those relevancies.

Within the public debate there was a sharp polarisation on the issue of what the absence of hard evidence meant, however it can only be explained in part by the centrality of the detection/verification distinction, since some of those who shared a stress on verification nevertheless did not assume the existence of WMD. Hans Blix, who clearly expressed a preference for an approach akin to: ‘they declare, we verify’ rather than just ‘they open doors, we search’ (Blix, 2004: 82), for example, tried to retain an air of legalistic objectivity by claiming to have made no assumptions either about existence or otherwise of weapons: ‘We presumed neither guilt nor innocence’ (Blix, 2004: 132).

Blix also claimed that the US administration had a different understanding of proof, evidence and ‘objectivity’. He wrote of a meeting with John Wolf, an American member of UNMOVIC’s College of Commissioners: ‘As I went through his formulations I understood them to say, *The witches exist; you are appointed to deal with these witches; testing whether there are witches is only a dilution of the witch hunt*’ (Blix, 2004: 202; original emphasis).

The persistent assumption of Iraqi guilt is portrayed as unfair, meaning that pursuit of the inspections process seemed disingenuous, and pointing to this allegedly unfair, imbalanced, burden of proof was one way that those against war tried to undermine the case for it. Shortly after UNSCR 1441 was passed, Baroness Williams of Crosby utilised a statement made by Donald Rumsfeld in precisely this way:

In answer to a caller on a recent phone-in programme in the United States, who asked what would happen if no weapons of mass destruction were found by United Nations inspectors inside Iraq, Mr Rumsfeld said: ‘What it would prove would be that the inspection process had been successfully

defeated by the Iraqis'. In other words, in the eyes of the Secretary of Defense, it is impossible to prove one's compliance.

(Hansard, 2002e: 873).

In his intervention, Michie points to this asymmetry and alleged unfairness in relation to the burden of proof:

Start by assuming that the Iraqis *haven't* got WMD. Then they are obliged to fail the test through non-compliance. From this non-compliance we'll then conclude that they have something to hide, i.e., that they *have* WMD. Alternatively start by assuming that they have WMD. Either way they stand convicted.

(Michie, 2003: 12, original emphasis).

With regard to the retrospective justification of the whole process, it can not help those making the case for legitimacy that the Butler Report even accused the UK Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) of operating with an asymmetric burden of proof with regard to Iraq:

Our impression is that [JIC assessments] were less complete, especially in their consideration of alternative hypotheses; used a different 'burden of proof' in testing Iraqi declarations; and hence inclined towards over-cautious or worse case estimates, carrying with them a greater sense of suspicion and an accompanying propensity to disbelieve.

(Butler *et al.*, 2004: 53).

Claims about such a differential burden of proof and the assumption of Iraqi guilt in the assessment of intelligence have subsequently been highly problematic for those who advocated war.

### ***12.6. Legal Justification: WMD, or Morality and Regime Change***

I have reiterated that I am not adjudicating the rightness and wrongness of the contributions analysed, and I am also only interested in the question of the 'legality' of the invasion in so far as it was something asserted by contributors. For analytic purposes I am neither

interested in whether it ‘really’ was legal, nor am I qualified to make such a determination. Indeed, there appears to be nothing even approximating a partial consensus amongst those who are qualified to do so!

### **12.6.1. The Relevance of the Weapons (and Their Absence?)**

One important dimension of debate concerns the question of the invasion’s legality, something brought into question by many opponents at its start due to the failure of the UN Security Council to agree upon a second resolution. The legality has subsequently been problematised in relation to the absence of any WMD stockpiles – the argument being that if there were no weapons then the justification and legality of war collapses:

It is no exaggeration to say that without any weapons find, the legal argument for waging war falls away. We are left with two possibilities: either Mr Blair believed what he was telling the Commons and the public, in which case he was culpably naïve. Or he lied in order to justify a war he supported for other reasons. Either way his credibility is on the line.

(Editorial, *The Independent*, 29/5/03: 18).

Since the supposed presence of WMD in Iraq was such a key component in the UK government’s case for invasion, their absence meant that invading was not justified. This contribution identifies two possibilities, which both have negative implications for Tony Blair’s credibility especially – either Blair was wrong, or he lied about his real reasons for advocating war.

As has already been implied in the contribution of Christopher Greenwood already cited (above), in countering such problems recourse was made to the weapons being unnecessary to make the war legal, with Iraqi non-cooperation being portrayed as the determinant factor (see Lord Goldsmith [Attorney General], in BBC, 2004a; Shawcross, 2004: 121).



### 12.6.2. Regime Change?

Although moral evaluations of Saddam Hussein were constantly stated in the build-up to war, those advocating military action in Britain were careful not to claim that this was sufficient moral and legal justification for war. They claimed not to be advocating a policy of regime change for regime change's sake.

Very often, a policy of regime change was denied directly, as in Tony Blair's assertion on the eve of war that: 'I have never put the justification for action as regime change' (Hansard, 2003d: 772). Alternatively a denial was packaged in conjunction with an expression of distaste for Saddam Hussein's Iraq. As Jack Straw put it:

I do not like the Saddam Hussein regime – I regard it as one of the most revolting and terrible regimes in the world – but the focus of 1441 is not regime change per se, but disarmament of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

(Hansard, 2003a: 272).

The moral evaluation is clear, but also recognised as insufficient justification. 'Regime change' for its own sake is not being advocated, and it is arguable that this was articulated against a background involving the widespread circulation of hostility to the idea that moral evaluation of a government or state alone was justification for the use of military force against it. The discourse of military intervention that was operating was not without limit, and one was located here – in the need for more than just moral evaluation to justify war.

In relation to the subsequent failure of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) to find WMD, this is where many of the problems faced by the UK government have emanated – as the absence of WMD became accepted, they have been left with a justification that they previously portrayed as insufficient for war.

The following section of this chapter will examine the way in which expectations and justifications relating to WMD specifically were observed as shifting once it became clearer that none were likely to be found. Observations were also made, especially by critics of the

war, pertaining to the UK government's shifting justifications – accusing them of illegitimately trying to shift from the threat of WMD to (insufficient) morality as a retrospective justification for the invasion due to the absence of stockpiles of WMD. For example:

That he was an evil man is not in dispute, but that was not why we went to war, so the retrospective justification as a crusade against evil with due parading of conscience is irrelevant.

(Roy Albinson, *The Times*, 4/6/03: 32).

In a manner similar to that noted in an earlier chapter, whilst the moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein is accepted as shared, it is also claimed to be irrelevant – it does not count as a sufficient reason for the military action, and therefore will not serve to justify the invasion on its own if no WMD are found.

Another contribution denying the sufficiency of the moral arguments made, drawing a distinction between a moral case and a moral reason, comes from cultural critic George Monbiot:

I do believe that there was a moral case for deposing Saddam – who was one of the world's most revolting tyrants – by violent means. I also believe that there was a moral case for not doing so, and that this case was the stronger. [...]

[A] moral case is not the same as a moral reason [...]

[T]hose of us who opposed it find ourselves drawn into this fairytale. We are obliged to argue about the relative moral merits of leaving Saddam in place or deposing him, while we know, though we are seldom brave enough to say it, that the moral issue is a distraction. The genius of the hawks has been to oblige us to accept a fiction as the reference point for debate [...]

Let us argue about the moral case for war by all means; but let us do so in the knowledge that it had nothing to do with the invasion of Iraq.

(*The Guardian*, 25/11/03: 23).

Very significantly, Monbiot identifies the sense in which, by being drawn into debates about morality of the invasion, critics of the war allow themselves to be pulled into a debate (with a fictional reference

point) which is disadvantageous to them. According to Monbiot, the moral case is irrelevant given the reasons for the legality of war given at the time. Monbiot asserts a clear separation between morality and legality, leaving open the possibility that something can be observed as both moral *and* illegal in separate observations.

### 12.6.3. Statements of Illegality

During the autumn of 2004, people with current or former institutional locations making their contributions highly relevant began to state without hedging that the war was 'illegal'. There was minor political embarrassment for Tony Blair, for example, when his former senior adviser on Europe, Sir Stephen Wall, said publicly that the invasion of Iraq was illegal (Bob Roberts, *Daily Mirror*, 9/11/04: 8).

More significant, however, was UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's decision to state publicly in an interview with the BBC World Service: 'it was not in conformity with the UN charter from our point of view, from the charter point of view it was illegal' (in BBC, 2004b). Although Annan is careful not to be speaking only for himself – it is a collective perception, grounded in the UN charter – the absence of significant hedging was seized upon by critics of the invasion:

The declaration of the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, on the Iraq war was shocking in its simplicity. He described it for the first time as 'illegal'. No caveats. No equivocation. None of the ambiguity loved by diplomats, especially at the UN headquarters. The shock is in part because Annan is an inherently cautious individual [...]

While Annan's verdict on the war is welcome, the pity is that he did not have the courage to make it last year, before the US and Britain embarked on war.

(Editorial, *The Guardian*, 17/9/04: 29).

From the point of view of those opposed to war it was unfortunate that he did not make such a clear declaration when it might have been more consequential – in advance of the invasion it might have created political problems for the 'coalition'. Nevertheless, despite the claims

that the war was in violation of the UN Charter, there appear to be no legal consequences for the governments involved.

## ***12.7. Shifting Expectations***

### **12.7.1. Second Order Observation of a Shift**

After the invasion, something very interesting started to happen from my point of view. There emerged many observations claiming that a shift was taking place in the official statements of the UK and US Governments – that they were attempting to reduce public expectations that ‘incontrovertible’ evidence of WMD would be found. For example, Kampfner (2004: 359) claims that things moved from assertions regarding weapons, to programmes, and then programme-related activities.

Allegations of a shift were particularly prominent in press coverage of the invasion’s aftermath, especially in, although not limited to, those sources opposed to the invasion.

Referring to a weapons ‘programme’ does not imply they exist or are being produced. The most it indicates is that production could begin in future [...]

The distinction between ‘programmes’ for weapons and actual weapons gained political significance after the Prime Minister told the Parliamentary Liaison Committee, made up of the chairs of the select committees, on 8 July that he had ‘absolutely no doubt that we will find evidence of weapons of mass destruction programmes’.

The change in language, away from earlier claims that weapons would be found, was not lost on his critics.

(Glen Rangwala, *The Independent on Sunday*, 17/8/03: 13).

The distinction that Rangwala draws is central in much of this ‘shifting’ talk – that between weapons and programmes – and was observable in many other contributions criticising the war. Moreover, it is the specific significance attributed to this distinction, this alleged shift, which is rendered a morally dubious matter. The observed shift was characterised in various negative ways, ranging from mild

ironisation and the impugning of self-interested motivations, to outright condemnation and sarcasm. For example, statements from US and UK principals were understood with a certain degree of suspicion as ‘the abrupt scaling down of expectations’ (Julian Borger, *The Guardian*, 29/5/03: 1), ‘a gradual shift in language’ (Andrew Grice, *The Independent*, 17/7/03: 2), and as ‘a significant softening of Downing Street’s stance’ (Nicholas Watts and Julian Borger, *The Guardian*, 18/7/03: 1), as well as representing an:

[an] escape route being tunnelled by ministers is to shift the standard of evidence required. They no longer promise to uncover actual weapons but talk of producing evidence of a potential to make such weapons.

(Robin Cook, *The Independent*, 8/7/03: 14).

In addition, commenting upon the subsequent creation of the phrase ‘weapons of mass destruction-related programme activities’, Timothy Garton Ash claimed that this was a dishonest twisting of language and was: ‘an early entrant for weasel words of the year’ (*The Guardian*, 22/1/04: 25).

Assessing the accusations made about exaggerations regarding WMD in the build-up, the late Hugo Young had previously made similar criticisms about Tony Blair:

So strong is his sincerity, however, that he has tried to underpin it by bending the language and the truth. The first sign came a few weeks ago, when Jack Straw started shifting tenses. Instead of saying that Iraq contains weapons of mass destruction, the foreign secretary began to blur ‘has’ into ‘had’, to cope with the inconvenient possibility that the weapons had been destroyed some time before war began.

(*The Guardian*, 3/6/03: 20).

Writing on both Blair and Bush, other critics observed a similar shift: ‘both men are working to lower the burden of proof – from finding weapons to finding evidence that there were programmes to develop

them' (Andrew Buncombe and Raymond Whitaker, *The Independent on Sunday*, 3/8/03: 8).

Other ironisation involved sarcasm about the 'objects' and evidence that would qualify under the new regime of expectations apparently being fostered. If the burden was successfully shifted in the direction desired by the US and UK governments then 'nothing more lethal than memos' (Editorial, *The Independent*, 30/9/03: 16) or 'only guilty paperwork' (Unattributed, *The Economist*, 19/7/03: 36-7) would be sufficient justification for invasion. This was treated in a rather derisory way, and it was implied that there was something very disturbing, and almost comical about this attempted shift. Like the observed shift from WMD to morality, it was argued to: 'not [...] merely move the goalposts, but transports the entire football field, stadium and all' (Cook, 2003: 294). When a further shift, from programmes to 'break-out capability and Saddam Hussein's 'strategic intent' (Tony Blair, Hansard, 2004: 197-8) to restart such programmes once sanctions were lifted, was observed at the time of the ISG's interim report (2004), the whole town was perhaps being moved.

### **12.7.2. The Dossier's Name Change**

Perhaps the most direct manifestation of the significance of the weapons/programmes distinction came during the UK's Hutton Inquiry, when it was revealed that the UK Government's dossier had undergone a change of title less than a week before its publication (Hutton, 2004: 471, 525, 585).

The significance was not lost on those who had been critical of the invasion:

Even ministers have given up pretending that they now expect to find actual weapons. Instead they have spent the past two months lowering expectations by encouraging the public to settle for evidence of *programmes* of weapons of mass destruction as proof that the dossier was right all along [...]

The decision to drop 'Programmes' from the title was deliberately calculated to encourage the belief that Iraq already had weapons and the threat therefore was urgent.

(Robin Cook, *The Independent*, 4/9/03: 16).

The change of the title is seen as aiming to make the threat from Iraq's alleged WMD seem more immediate, more 'real'. If the original title and its implications had been left in place it is possible that the evidence available after the war would have fitted with the tenor of the dossier more generally, but would have made it more difficult to justify war in advance.

The irony of the sense in which the title change had actually made evidence that would retrospectively justify invasion more difficult to obtain was also noted by critics:

The 19 September version was entitled *Iraq's Programme for Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Yet the final version was called simply *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction*. This change is rich in irony because since the war Mr Blair has subtly but significantly toned down his claims that WMD would be found in Iraq to say that 'evidence' of weapons 'programmes' would be uncovered. So the wheel has come full circle.

(Andrew Grice, *The Independent*, 19/8/03: 5).

The wheel may have come 'full circle', but it did not do so very smoothly, and at times through the whole episode the wheels have been quite close to coming off completely!

### **12.7.3. Supporters of War Distinguishing Themselves**

The apparent consensus on the shift in the strength of language used by the UK government was not limited to critics of the war. Those who supported the invasion also made similar observations, often to disassociate themselves from the government, a practice similar to the types of triangulation and the logic of the foil I have previously mentioned.

For example, an Editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*, generally supportive of the invasion, but not the Blair government, claimed that Blair was facing a ‘credibility crisis’, adding that the statements made by cabinet members:

swing from bullish confidence that WMD are certain to turn up eventually to the claim that their existence was never the sole justification for going to war [...]

Mr Blair, desperate for the support of his own party, nailed himself firmly to the mast of WMD as the *casus belli* and allowed his spin machine to exaggerate the danger to Britain. He may have managed to win a war that was morally justified, only to lose an argument that was badly conducted.

(Editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 30/5/03: 29).

The paper distances itself from the WMD controversy by claiming the war was morally justified but that the official process of justification was badly conducted – something for which the *Telegraph* cannot be blamed. Again in the *Telegraph*, several months later, a similar logic is clearly visible:

Opponents of the war on Saddam Hussein are cock-a-hoop that, in the months since liberation, the inter-allied Iraq Survey Group (ISG) has not yet discovered weapons of mass destruction. As far as they are concerned this invalidates the main reason for sending troops into harm’s way. But are the ISG’s findings the last word on the matter? After all, the search for WMD was very slow off the mark and was not a high military priority in the days following liberation [...]

The survey confirms that Iraq was in violation of UN resolutions on its WMD programmes. Are the opponents of the war seriously suggesting that Saddam should have been allowed to fulfil what was, at minimum, a desire to acquire such weapons? The answer is obviously not. But *what can be said is that possession of WMD alone was a dangerously narrow basis on which to advocate the case for war. The better argument for overthrowing Saddam was that put forward by figures such as Paul Wolfowitz, the US Deputy Defence Secretary: that the radical regimes of the Middle East that had given a haven to terrorists over the years had to be fatally weakened after September 11, so that more pluralistic forces could emerge in the region.* The weapons that such regimes possessed,



and that they might have passed to suicidal sub-state forces, were mere symptoms of their totalitarian nature. WMD added much to their subversive muscle, but were not the be-all and end-all of the threat posed. Had Tony Blair couched the matter in broader terms than those set by the UN, he might be in less political difficulty now.

(Editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3/10/03: 29, emphasis added).

Blair is again described as doing the right thing, but using the wrong justification, while the *Telegraph* claims better reasons for its position – distancing itself from Blair which given its general antipathy towards him, is far from surprising. This gets across some of the complexity involved in managing one's friends, enemies and context-specific allies.

#### 12.7.4. Weapons are Not Really Necessary...

There was another dimension to this type of discursive work – statements claiming that finding weapons was actually unnecessary.

A statement from Jack Straw was picked up by the British press, particularly those who were critical of the invasion, as representing this general shift:

Jack Straw was forced to concede that hard evidence might never be uncovered.

He said it was 'not crucially important' to find [WMD], because the evidence of Iraqi wrong-doing was overwhelming [...] Similar back-tracking is apparent in Washington where the national security adviser, Condoleeza Rice, said last week that the US was pinning its hope on finding incriminating documents rather than actual weapons.

(Nicholas Watt, *The Guardian*, 15/5/03: 4; also see Ben Russell, *The Independent*, 15/5/03: 1).

Again here we are in the realm of 'back-tracking' from what has been said before, and the apparent expansion of the parameters of evidence being expanded to include documents, as evidence of 'programmes' being sufficient.

Straw made a similar statement a few months later:

The foreign secretary, Jack Straw, yesterday insisted the invasion of Iraq would still be justifiable even if British and US forces had to admit that no weapons of mass destruction could be found in Iraq [...]

Mr Straw, addressing the UN general assembly in New York, said that the fact that evidence was 'difficult to obtain' did not mean it did not exist. There had been 'overwhelming evidence' of unanswered disarmament questions before the war, he said.

(Patrick Wintour, *The Guardian*, 26/9/03: 8).

What is important here is that phrase 'unanswered disarmament questions' which seems to be held up as sufficient justification for invasion is something likely to be viewed with the same suspicion as 'lethal memos' and 'guilty documents'.

Nevertheless, these sorts of 'objects' – unanswered questions, evidence of infrastructures – have become increasingly prominent in the statements of all those with a stake in having the war viewed positively. Here is an example from Tony Blair at one of his monthly press conferences, focusing explicitly on the war's legality:

[F]or this war, even in retrospect, to be lawful, it requires breaches of UN resolutions. Already what the Iraq Survey Group has uncovered that, so even if there were issues to do with the legality of the war, if what David Kay is saying is right, if what the Iraq Survey Group is saying is right, and there were facilities and laboratories and documents that were not disclosed to the UN that should have been, then, that is the clearest possible breach, not just of earlier UN resolutions but specifically of UN resolution 1441. And that is why I say to you that in the end all these things, everything that is happening in this debate is a cover for people wanting to have a debate about the rightness or wrongness of the conflict, and that is actually the debate we should have and that is a perfectly sensible debate. But it is not a debate actually about the law, about conspiracies, about security services, it is actually a debate about was it right to remove Saddam Hussein in the way you did, or should you have waited and given the inspectors more time? That is actually the heart of this debate and it would be sensible to have it on that basis.

(Blair, 2004a).

Technically the non-disclosure of facilities, laboratories and the unresolved status of disarmament questions might all be considered breaches of UNSCR 1441, but the frustration for those critical of the action was that they perceived this as not the case made for war – it was made on the more extreme grounds that weapons existed which could be used and constituted a threat. The problem for someone like me trying to make sense of the basis upon which the case was ‘really’ made, apart from a degree of epistemological humility, is that there was such a proliferation of information, so many relevant speeches, so many pertinent statements circulating that the sheer volume prohibits clarity. It is possible to find examples of most people saying most things, something making it difficult to observe a clear change, and leading to a certain amount of information fatigue. However, it is possible to observe the emergence of this discourse concerned with a shift, and map some of its strategic relevancies, both for those alleged to be making it, and those observing its operation.

### **12.8. *Finding Nothing But Explanations***

As can be seen from the concerns circulating in the previous section the absence of tangible WMD in Iraq was attributed moral and strategic importance vis-à-vis the war’s justification. For a particular constituency: ‘Anything less than a solid discovery of WMD in Iraq undermines the principal argument for the military invasion’ (Quentin Peel, *Financial Times*, 8/7/03: 19).

The alternative interpretation that I have already focused heavily upon is that that finding stockpiles of weapons was not necessary, programmes and the obstruction of inspections were sufficient justification for the action taken. This, however, did not operate in isolation – other explanations and interpretations of the absence of such weapons were in circulation, many of which are discussed below.

### 12.8.1. Just Because You Cannot Find Something...

One approach utilised was to assert that just because something cannot be found, it does not mean it is not there. As Andrew Murray observed:

It is now semi-acknowledged that the fabled 'weapons of mass destruction' are not going to be found in Iraq [...] We are told that Downing Street's defence will hinge on the argument that *just because WMD are nowhere to be seen, it does not mean they are not there.*

*(The Guardian, 27/9/03: 21, emphasis added).*

As chairman of the Stop the War Coalition, he clearly has reasons for undermining the case for war, but he does successfully identify the logic of many contributions, such as that of Daniel Finkelstein, quite neatly: '[T]here is a world of difference between not finding the weapons and the weapons not existing' (*The Times*, 30/5/03: 24).

This logic is close to that identified by Douglas and Wildavsky (1982: 54) in relation to 'risk' and specifically tests for carcinogens and their 'catch-22' quality: you can be sure if you find something, but if you do not, you can not assume that it is not there because your method may have been flawed. Hence, Tony Blair's constant calls, post-war, for everyone to wait until the Iraq Survey Group produced its final report before drawing firm conclusions.

This deferral of the moment of ultimate conclusion was also present in the Butler Report, published in July 2004. The authors elaborated that:

Even now it would be premature to reach conclusions about Iraq's prohibited weapons. Much potential evidence may have been destroyed in the looting and disorder that followed the cessation of hostilities. Other material may be hidden in the sand, including stocks of agent or weapons. We believe that it would be a rash person who asserted at this stage that evidence of Iraqi possession of stocks of biological or chemical agents, or even of banned missiles, does not exist or will never be found.

*(Butler et al., 2004: 116).*

Before the report was published, the previous head of the ISG, David Kay, had noted several times that they were unlikely to find stockpiles of weapons, and his statements were viewed as highly problematic because they came from a man who had been consistently hawkish on Iraq for a long time (see Julian Borger, *The Guardian: G2*, 3/3/04: 2). When he eventually described Tony Blair as ‘delusional’ for continuing to insist WMD would be found (Peter Beaumont, *The Observer*, 6/6/04: 24), this obviously created something of a problem for Blair – the man who had been in control of the search, who was keen to find stockpiles himself was admitting they were not going to be found and that anyone who still expected findings was kidding themselves.

It is probably fair to say that many of those opposed to the war were also surprised at the lack of WMD findings, and would have been shocked to hear the ISG’s (2004) interim findings if they had been available before the war.

For some such people, their surprise was due to their expectation that something to be ‘found’ in convenient and sinister way. For example, Denis Healy, former Labour Cabinet member, stated that he ‘would not put it past the Americans to plant their own weapons of mass destruction there’ (*The Independent*, 5/6/03: 19). The fact that this did not occur was praised by philosopher Peter Singer. In an interview about his book (Singer, 2004), he said of George W. Bush that: ‘A man of less integrity would have put them there’ (in Gary Younge, *The Guardian: G2*, 14/4/04: 6)!

### **12.8.2. Weapons Could Have Been Destroyed, or Removed**

An alternative set of claims speculated that the reason no stockpiles were found was that any weapons that were once there had been destroyed. Those accepting this hypothesis can be differentiated into two main groups: those opposed to the war who claimed they were destroyed long ago, and those in favour, or official sources which did not actively disapprove, who claimed that they could have been destroyed or removed *immediately* before the war began.

For the first of these two groups, given his previous institutional location, Hans Blix was an important contributor, advancing the hypothesis that Iraq cultivated the image of retaining WMD, despite having destroyed them, as a bluff – like a beware of the dog sign on a house with no dog:

[T]he former United Nations chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said that Iraq had probably destroyed its most deadly weapons of mass destruction more than an decade ago.

Mr Blix, who retired in June, told the Australian state broadcaster ABC: 'I'm certainly more and more to the conclusion that Iraq has, as they maintained, destroyed all, almost, of what they had in the summer of 1991.' [...] Mr Blix suggested that Saddam's regime chose to keep up appearances to deter attack [...] He said: 'Iraq may have tried to fool them surreptitiously in believing that there was something. You see, if they didn't have anything after 1991, there must be some explanation why they behaved as they did. They certainly gave the impression that they were denying access and so forth.

'I mean, you can put up a sign on your door, "Beware of the Dog", without having a dog.'

(David Osborne and Nigel Morris, *The Independent*, 18/9/03: 1).

One of the UK's official inquiries into the pre-war intelligence noted the alternative hypothesis that the WMD were destroyed immediately before invasion:

One suggested possibility is that the intelligence from Iraq was correct, but that Iraq took a unilateral decision to destroy its WMD capabilities prior to the outbreak of conflict in March, perhaps in response to the growing international pressure as military action approached [...]

If Iraq did destroy all proscribed material unilaterally, that would raise questions as to why it failed to provide documentary evidence to UN weapons inspectors in support of its claims [...]

It is also possible that Iraq did destroy its stocks and weapons unilaterally, but sought to protect the technical expertise and the capability required to reconstitute its WMD capability at relatively short notice once, UN had been eased or lifted.

(FAC, 2002: 75-6).

The authors are perhaps justified in asking why, if it had destroyed any WMD it possessed, Iraq failed to provide documentary evidence to that effect – a potentially difficult discursive obstacle for those against the war to negotiate. The passage also points to the ‘programmes’ issue again, implying that technical expertise’ was sufficiently illegitimate to warrant military action. The subsequent Butler report (2004: 97) also acknowledged the possibility that WMD could have been destroyed in the chaos following the main hostilities.

In his evidence to the House of Commons Liaison Committee, in response to a question from Sir George Young, Tony Blair conceded for the first time, that WMD might never be found, a statement which was widely attributed a great significance:

I have to accept that we have not found them and that we may not find them. What I would say very strongly, however, is that to go to the opposite extreme and say, therefore, no threat existed from Saddam Hussein would be a mistake. We do not know what has happened to them; they could have been removed, they could have been hidden, they could have been destroyed.

(Blair, 2004b – uncorrected transcript).

Over a month later in his keynote speech at the Labour Party Conference (28/9/04), he went further, admitting that the intelligence was ‘wrong’ and there were no WMD in Iraq before the war, but refusing to apologise for the fact that this led to removing Saddam Hussein:

The evidence about Saddam having actual biological and chemical weapons, as opposed to the capability to develop them, has turned out to be wrong.

I acknowledge that and accept it.

I simply point out, such evidence was agreed by the whole international community, not least because Saddam had used such weapons against his own people and neighbouring countries.

And the problem is I can apologise for the information that turned out to be wrong, but I can't sincerely at least, apologise for removing Saddam. The world is a better place with Saddam in prison not in power.

(Blair, 2004d).

Again the badness of Saddam Hussein is stressed and implicitly claimed as sufficient justification for the action taken – it was 'enough' to justify the absence of an apology for war, contrasting with his earlier distancing of himself from the possibility that regime change was the reason for invasion.

### **12.8.3. Lies and Propaganda or Mistakes?**

These various justifications and explanations were not the only ones articulated for the inability to find WMD in Iraq. It has been posited that the accusations that Iraq possessed WMD were lies, rested on 'speculative exaggeration' (Editorial, *The Independent*, 2/6/03: 12), or that claims about their presence were based upon flawed intelligence which was 'sexed up'.

The primary cultural artefact subject to scrutiny in relation to these accusations within the UK has been the infamous dossier (UK Government, 2002). At the time of its publication, a variety of views were expressed regarding its merits or their absence, and even those who subsequently criticised intensely the case for war, praised the dossier: 'It is a great credit to our intelligence services that the dossier is so balanced, so objective, so factual and so much eschews rhetorical flourishes' (Baroness Williams of Crosby, Hansard, 2002c: 865).

Other contributors claimed that the dossier constituted 'proof': 'The dossier proves that Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction' (The Lord Bishop of London, Hansard, 2002c: 886), whereas others took the contrary view - that it was nothing more than:

an attempt to put an official seal of approval on speculation [...] I could not disagree more with hon. Members who have said that all the evidence is here in the dossier. [...] It is light on fact, and heavy on conjecture.

(Alice Mahon [Labour], Hansard, 2002b: 100).



After the conflict, and talking more generally of the case for war, Hans Blix, former head of UNMOVIC, made a rhetorically effective statement regarding this notion of exaggeration:

I think it was a spin that was not acceptable. They put exclamation marks where there had been question marks and I think that is hyping, a spin, that leads the public to the wrong conclusions.

(in BBC, 2004a).

The difference that makes a difference rhetorically here is between question and exclamation marks – a nice piece of spin in its own right. As ever, the discursive location – the ‘communicative career’ – of the person making the statement is very important for the amount of attention and weight given it.

More extreme than these claims about speculation and exaggeration are the accusations of a greater mendacity – those making the case for war were deliberately lying. In this regard, the Stop the War Coalition’s ‘Bliar’ campaign, swapping the two letters in Blair’s name, is a prime example.

To try and combat this set of claims, those supportive of the war’s aims seized upon the conclusions of the various investigations and inquiries made into the uses of intelligence, and the Butler report specifically. On the question of Blair’s (and Bush’s) honesty, David Aaronovitch made use of Butler’s lack of ambiguity on the issue of honesty:

Butler does not make an ambiguous judgment on the accusation of deliberate deception. He rules against it [...]

The ‘liar’ position depends on an assertion that Bush and Blair half-expected there to be no WMD. That assertion, as Butler makes clear, is not credible.

(*The Observer*, 18/7/04: 26).

A critic might point out that the Butler Report only ‘found *no evidence* of deliberate distortion or of culpable negligence’ (Butler *et al.*, 2004:

110; original emphasis), and if we applied the same evidential standards to this as those in favour of the invasion utilise on the WMD question then just because no evidence can be found, it does not mean that it is not there! However, that is not really the point. What is important is that the document is drawn on selectively, and that the assertion that accusations about lying are ‘not credible’ is yet another example of a statement ‘hoping’ for a direct performative effect – challenging those wishing to claim as much, to deal with the moral consequences resulting from such an allegedly ‘incredible’ claim.

Accusations about lying were actually relatively rare within the ‘mainstream’ political system (including those journalists and critics associated with it), and people criticising the action often disclaimed that they were accusing Tony Blair *et al* of lying. Below are two examples, both drawn from *The Independent* newspaper:

I don’t myself believe that he was actually mendacious in his presentation of the threat of Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction. He was probably guilty of no more than massaging what he saw to be the truth for what he considered to be an end that would justify his means.

(Deborah Orr, *The Independent*, 3/6/03: 12).

Personally I never thought the Prime Minister acted on Iraq in anything other than good faith. On the contrary, the problem may have been at the other extreme. The burning sincerity with which Tony Blair believed in the case for war may have led him into seizing too uncritically on those pieces of information that supported the conclusion he had already reached that war would be justified.

(Robin Cook, *The Independent*, 6/6/03: 16).

Both these contributions rely upon a distinction between lying (illegitimate) and something else (portrayed as less illegitimate). In the first example, this is Blair ‘massaging what he saw to be the truth’, and in the second, it is ‘burning sincerity’ which affected his judgment.

Since both the writers are generally political ‘allies’ of Blair, the positioning involved is similar (and yet opposite) in its logic to that

of those contributions of those who were pro-war but anti-Blair in a more general sense. It is a matter of managing the enemy/friend distinction with the use of some kind of context-specific supplementary clarification: pro-Blair *but* anti-war, pro-war *but* anti-Blair.

An alternative ‘not quite lies’ argument, of specific theoretical interest comes from commentator Timothy Garton Ash:

[W]e went to war with Saddam Hussein on the basis of Anglo-American intelligence reports that were, at best, politically misrepresented, or, at worst, falsified [...] [T]he trend in journalism as in politics, and probably now in the political use of intelligence, is away from the facts and towards a neo-Orwellian world of manufactured reality. This is something slightly different from (though close to) straight lies.

*(The Guardian, 5/6/03: 23).*

Here we are portrayed as moving towards some sort of Baudrillardian simulation (Baudrillard, 1983), which is alleged to be highly problematic. Faced with this, Garton Ash advances the arguably naïve solution that if journalists pursue the ‘facts’ than this advancing world would be forced into retreat, although he neglects to address how pursuit of ‘the facts’ can occur if the nature of factuality is no longer agreed upon.

In this specific case, a number of inquiries have been held in the UK and the US, all in search of ‘the facts’. The Hutton Report (2004) was widely dismissed by critics of the invasion as a ‘whitewash’, and the more recent Butler Report (2004) was sufficiently ambiguous to let everyone find something within them to support almost any argument they wanted!

In the ‘Letter to the Prime Minister’ at the start of the ISC’s (2003) Report the authors included a disclaimer regarding the report’s intentions:

This Report does not judge whether the decision to invade Iraq was correct. Its purpose is to examine whether the available intelligence, which

informed the decision to invade Iraq, was adequate and properly reflected in Government publications.

(ISC, 2003: no pagination).

Variations on this clarification or disclaimer also appeared throughout the report (for example on pages 5 and 41). This allows those more in favour of the invasion to conclude that the report did not criticise the decision to invade, without having to mention that that is because it was a question that was not directly asked!

In the context of hunting, similar use is made of the Burns Report (Burns *et al.*, 2000) which constantly stressed that it was not passing judgment on whether hunting with dogs was cruel or not – not making an ethical assessment. This constant denial of an engagement in moral evaluation on the part of the authors has not stopped both sides in that debate spending the last four years constantly claiming that that the report directly supported their position on the morality and ethics of hunting!

In the context of Iraq, the ISC displaces the issue of what should have happened onto the question of whether the intelligence available was used correctly, which also half-sidesteps the question of the accuracy of that intelligence, and questions regarding the responsibility for it.

A variety of explanations were generated elsewhere for the apparent failure of the intelligence services to ‘accurately’ identify Iraq’s capabilities, most of which were described tentatively in the Butler Report. These tended to locate the ‘blame’ collectively and non-specifically in systems, institutions and practices. For example, Butler *et al.* (2004) identified the risks of the development of a kind of ‘group think’ and a ‘prevailing wisdom’ about Iraq (Butler *et al.*, 2004: 16), which meant that intelligence assessments:

tended to be over-cautious and in some cases worst case. Where there was a balance of inference to be drawn, it tended to go in the direction of inferring the existence of banned weapons programmes.

(Butler *et al.*, 2004: 111).

A related but alternative explanation was that the intelligence situation was an 'echo chamber' in which the same intelligence sources were unintentionally used to corroborate themselves (David Rose, *The Observer*, 30/5/04: 23).

All these attempts at explanation are of course partially related to the continued need for legitimation of the invasion, and the need to account for how what happened could have been based on a set of claims that many people involved now accept was inaccurate.

### **12.9. Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped some of discursive contours of communications involving the phrase WMD in the public debate concerned with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It has explored some of the subtle distinctions advanced for strategic and moral reasons in pursuit of definitional control in relation to the significance of the phrase 'weapons of mass destruction'.

The following chapter will bring together the contents of the preceding empirical chapters in order to restate their interconnectedness and identify more directly some important regularities that should be noted and explored in greater detail by future research.

### 13. *Discussion and Conclusions*

'Of course, denying it wouldn't have worked. The way things were, if somebody came up to you and said, "Hi there, I'm a Rosicrucian," that meant he wasn't. No self-respecting Rosicrucian would acknowledge it. On the contrary, he would deny it to his last breath.'

'But you can't say that anyone who denies being a Rosicrucian is a Rosicrucian, because I say I am not, and that doesn't make *me* one.'

'But the denial itself is suspicious.'

'No, it's not. What would a Rosicrucian do once he realized people weren't believing those who said they were, and that people suspected only those who said they weren't? He'd say that he was, to make them think he wasn't.'

(Eco, 1990: 199)

Having discussed the theoretical background informing this project, including the way it is influenced by the work of Foucault and Luhmann, this thesis has outlined some pertinent literature concerned with the 'Iraq Crisis', and explained the methodological approach adopted. This included discussion of the discursive difficulty that can result from the circulation and application of morally asymmetrical distinctions, including the types of statement that accusations associated with such distinctions can incite as a form of resistance.

I then moved on to focus upon various dimensions of the public debate preceding and surrounding the invasion of Iraq in 2003, including some of the regularities observable in relation to the difficulty and moral asymmetries mobilised and evaded by contributors.

As will already be clear, the interconnections between the various empirical chapters are not particularly 'neat'. The best way to think of the interconnections between them would be as a set of partially overlapping Venn diagrams. This chapter explores some of the regularities identified in the empirical chapters in more general

terms and discusses some significant and interesting issues which deserve to be pursued in greater depth in future.

I provide a brief overview of some of the most notable things addressed in the empirical chapters, and after this summary, the rest of the chapter is organised thematically under the following headings:

- Moral Asymmetry, Contrast, and Triangulation
- Confluent Alliances, Confluent Enmity
- The Communicative Career
- Phases of Refolding or Reflection

### **13.1. *Summary of Key Findings***

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 5) attended to the significance of ‘the war on terrorism’ (WoT) as a frame for the debate, and described some of the ways in which Iraq’s relationship was envisaged (or not) in arguments for and against the invasion in 2003. This demonstrated that contributions on the same side of the debate advanced completely different conceptions of the relationship between Iraq and WoT. Those advocating invasion offered opposite views on Iraq’s relation to WoT in the face of differing discursive threats from their opponents. Advocates of war had to avoid the illegitimacy associated with their position being too connected, or not connected enough, with the WoT for various reasons. I also speculated on the difference that it might have made if the alternative frame ‘*campaign against terrorism*’ had framed the discursive context.

I moved on to discuss two accusations made against those against war – that they were ‘anti-American’ or ‘pro-Saddam’. Various techniques were observed as regularly employed in countering such accusations, including disclaiming and the provision of evidence to the contrary. I also noted the stress placed upon particular distinctions, such as that between a government and its people, in the associated disclaiming.

In relation to anti-Americanism in particular I noted the ways in which some contributions invoked the existence of other more 'extreme' elements on the same side of the debate as them in order to differentiate themselves as more legitimate – using them as a contrastive foil – and thereby mobilising a morally asymmetrical distinction between 'anti-war and anti-American' and 'anti-war *but not* anti-American'.

In relation to the pro-Saddam accusations, I observed the drawing of a key distinction between the morality and legality of invasion, as those against war often stressed their negative moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein whilst stating that the legality of removing him (regime change) did not automatically follow from that. I also explored the problems faced by two individuals – George Galloway and Scott Ritter, and the way in which their 'communicative careers' were important for the ways in which their contributions were understood. In relation to Ritter, in particular I noted the significance attributed to his apparent 'conversion' on the issue, and the way in which he seemed to adopt the role of the 'parrhesiastes' by implying that risks and difficulties associated with his position meant it should be taken more seriously.

Next I moved onto the significance of historical analogies, particularly those associated with Hitler, and the implication that those against war wanted to engage in 'appeasement', as well as the way that such accusations were problematised. As with anti-Americanism and the pro-Saddam accusations, much problematisation proceeded via disclaiming, but also evident was a process of reversal, with those against war accusing their opponents of engaging in appeasement of the United States – an approach which reaffirms the relevance of appeasement as illegitimate, and implies a degree of variability in its potential application.

I also explored the competing but less successful analogies drawn with the 'Suez Crisis' and the Vietnam War, and based upon the 'need' for an exorcism or form of redemption evident in many discussions of Vietnam, I advanced the possibility that the significance



of 'appeasement', especially in a British context, is related to a similar need not to repeat what are observed as the 'errors' of the past.

Next, I looked at accusations of 'pacifism' and of 'warmongering', advanced at contributors on opposing sides in the debate. In relation to pacifism I noted the way in which, although observed as illegitimate, it is nevertheless treated with a degree of respect suggesting that it is more a technical than moral disqualification. The implication is that, although someone affected by it is disqualified from legitimately taking part in debate over whether a war should be countenanced, they should not be condemned in the same way as those identified in other more morally negative ways.

On the opposite side of the debate, some contributors had to disclaim that they were warmongers who were irrationally eager for war. One technique adopted in such denial was to claim membership of a wider (majority) community which dislikes war and sees it as only a 'last resort'. Another related and recurrent issue was a stress placed upon the absence or deferral of a decision to invade – that none had yet been made, and that the best way to avoid having one was to demonstrate a credible threat of force to pressurise Iraq into compliance.

I also discussed some of the avian metaphors used to make sense of the position of contributors, including various supplements to the standard hawk/dove distinction. Based upon this I noted the significance of Colin Powell's conversion – his observed transformation from dove to hawk – and the way in which his communicative career, his being understood as *not* a warmonger, was used in pursuit of persuasive force immediately before the invasion.

I moved on to discuss the significance attributed to 'supporting the troops', and the way that this imperative produced a moral consensus as military action became imminent. Pressure was placed upon those opposed to war to cease their criticism in the interests of the troops ('our boys'), something which incited critics to stress their support for the troops at the same time as advancing criticism. Some

even claimed that the best way of demonstrating support would be to ask for their withdrawal.

In a parliamentary context, I noted how the Liberal Democrats, in particular, suffered from the apparent inconsistency of advancing support for the troops whilst criticising their deployment. Nevertheless, I also noted the way in which those against war have utilised the valorisation of the troops, and their families, to undermine their continued presence in Iraq in the invasion's aftermath.

The final empirical chapter concerned some of the discursive contours of discussion regarding 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMD). I described the way in which the vagueness of the phrase's definition is admitted by some contributors, but has not prevented many contributors constantly stating that there was (or could be) 'no doubt' about their presence or absence in Iraq, albeit often mixing such certainty with a degree of hedging.

I discussed the significance of UNSCR 1441, including the denial that it contained a trigger for war, as well as the degree of vagueness about what was to count as a material breach of it. I also argued that the correct role of the UN weapons inspectors was understood via operation of a morally asymmetrical distinction between *detection* and *verification*, and that some of the problems faced by the pro-war case resulted from a failure to ensure that the inspectors' role was understood as one of verification at an early stage.

On a related issue, I noted the way in which the burden of proof was envisaged in the debate, with the emphasis strongly upon Iraq (Saddam Hussein) to comply. I also identified the widely drawn distinction between WMD and morality (regime change) as justification for war, particularly the way in which (similar to the separation envisaged in denial of being pro-Saddam) the morality and legality of invasion were distinguished. It was claimed, by some, that there was moral justification for war, but that it was nevertheless illegal since more than a moral evaluation was required. I also mentioned the apparently increasing willingness, in the aftermath, of relevant people to state categorically that the invasion was illegal.

I also identified the way in which a shift in the reasons used retrospectively to justify war was widely observed, particularly in relation to WMD. Many observed a ‘downward’ shift over time from WMD to *WMD programmes*, to *WMD programme-related activities*, and then to Saddam Hussein’s intentions, as it became clear that no WMD were going to be found.

In a manner similar to the triangulation and foil logic mentioned in other chapters, I observed the way in which the absence of WMD was dealt with by some supporters of war, who distinguished themselves from the ‘official’ WMD-related justifications – saying that the correct action (invasion) was taken but was justified using the wrong reasons, and that their reasons for supporting invasion were better in contrast.

Finally, I noted some of the explanations advanced for the coalition’s inability to locate WMD in Iraq, ranging from the argument that failure to find something does not mean it is not there, to the possibility that the weapons could have been destroyed before war, or whether this was based upon mistaken intelligence or more mendacious propaganda or lies.

Having summarised the empirical chapters, I will now explore what are some of the most interesting themes emergent from them.

### ***13.2. Moral Asymmetry, Contrast, and Triangulation***

The things that one finds out about something are to a very large extent a product of the way that you set out to observe it. It would make no sense for me to deny this given that I have utilised the work of Niklas Luhmann, which is all about such observer-dependency (albeit one in which systems are doing the observing). Nevertheless, the particular way in which I have engaged in observation of the public debate surrounding the ‘Iraq Crisis’ has generated some interesting findings which can be generalised and potentially applied to other areas, because the project is not ‘about’ the ‘Iraq Crisis’ in an orthodox way. Rather, it is about the discursive difficulties

constructed for particular contributors within that context, difficulties which have a clearly moral inflection in the sense of being about the operation of evaluations according to the distinctions good/bad, right/wrong, esteem/contempt in Niklas Luhmann's sense.

### **13.2.1. The Ubiquity of Moral Evaluation, and Moral Asymmetries**

Much of the content of this thesis provides evidence for the ubiquitous *potential* of moral evaluation. Despite narratives claiming a decline in the significance of morality, it is still always possible that communication or discourse will be observed morally – as good/bad, appropriate/inappropriate. If moral evaluation is an ever-present possibility, then communications are all therefore potentially morally accountable.

I have adopted a position on moral evaluation as a dynamic process, not as involving the implementation of a clearly codified, rigid set of already made evaluations. Instead valuation is viewed as a more open-ended, contingent process, one that is always possible, but one whose occurrence can not be entirely predicted. This to some extent presupposes that a clearly shared set of universally applicable moral principles no longer exists (if it ever did), and that morality is more a matter of form than content.

It is in relation to this nebulosity, this absence of a clearly shared, predictable set of valuations, that the discursive moral 'difficulty' with I have been concerned intensifies. If moral evaluations are a constant possibility, but you can not be sure upon exactly what basis you might be evaluated, then things are even more difficult than they would be if it was clear what you needed to say to avoid condemnation or illegitimacy – there are no guarantees that whatever response you formulate will not be evaluated negatively. For example, in this context, some of those critics making sure to state their 'support of the troops' were, nevertheless, implied to be merely stating the 'usual words' as if the production of such statements was a formulaic, and therefore illegitimate response to the 'need' to agree.

As set out in my theoretical chapter, it is possible for particular statements to locate the contributor entirely outside the parameters of legitimate debate – as unintelligible – or according to a moral asymmetry, internal to a specific discursive space. In a controversial situation, where there is a strong sense of polarisation into for/against positions, the possibilities can be condensed in such a way that the available likely types of observation and evaluations – the number of distinctions likely to be used – is reduced. It can become relatively clear to potential contributors that particular distinctions, say between the anti-American and the more ‘reasonable’ person, are likely to be applied if you make particular types of statement. The sense of ‘difficulty’ therefore comes from the possibility of negative evaluation according to a morally asymmetrical distinction – the threat of a difference that makes a difference morally (and also strategically).

Awareness of the circulation of specific moral asymmetries can lead to specific strategic imperatives, but a more generalised imperative results from the threat of illegitimacy, forcing people to have particular relations with themselves. The difficulty resulting from the circulation of asymmetries requires or incites particular types of statement, which are repressively present, and aimed at problematising the distinctions in operation, or attempting to secure a position on one side rather than the other. People are encouraged to relate to and talk about themselves in particular ways, making claims about how they can or would prefer to be (or should be) observed, and for what reasons, and I have discussed many such examples observable in the public debate over the invasion of Iraq.

There is no good reason to assume that these sorts of processes are restricted to this context, although particular accusations are more likely to be more transportable than others. That would require detailed empirical investigation across several contexts. I would argue that thinking about similar issues in virtually any context would be a productive starting point for understanding the types of difficulties, pressures and limits with which contributors are faced, and therefore one dimension that could be probed in order to understand or explain

how a debate unfolds in the ways it does. A question such as: ‘What moral asymmetries are in circulation in any given context, and how are they engaged with and problematised by those to whom they are applied?’ could be used to bring into focus some of the important dimensions of a specific discursive context, without unnecessarily restricting the types of observation made.

### 13.2.2. Clarification Only?

One objection to the type of understanding that I am advocating, one alternative approach to the use of contrastive conjunctions, would be to see them as clarification only, as morally ‘innocent’ – as if clarification were not a morally accountable, and potentially problematic, matter. However (again I am, ironically, using one such conjunction in writing about them), clarification also occurs in relation to perceived negative misunderstandings, and therefore is a moral or normative matter operating in relation to moral asymmetries. Even seemingly ordinary practices are ‘interested’ in the sense of being directed towards something. They are strategic, if strategy is conceived in a non-cognitive, non-intentional sense (Potter, 1996: 65; Dean, 1999: 72) – directed towards some end, moving along a particular trajectory.

For example, my ‘clarification’ about what I have *not* been doing in this thesis – providing an authoritative, explanatory account of the invasion of Iraq – is interested, directed to an end. It (hopefully) makes a difference regarding the way in the project is to be evaluated. If it were evaluated as attempting to produce such an account, I would likely be assessed, quite rightly, as having failed rather spectacularly! So I attempted to negotiate this ‘difficulty’ by intervening discursively in the attempted to preclude a particular type of evaluation. If successful, it will not ensure a particular type of evaluation, but may prevent an especially unhelpful possibility. Even seemingly ‘ordinary’ or ‘banal’ activities have a type of morally significant trajectory that merits analytic attention.

### 13.2.3. 'But' as Coupling and Decoupling

Since 'but' is a contrastive conjunction it is rather obvious that it, along with 'nevertheless' and 'however' etc, are used in activities which contrast and connect things!

The various interventions we have seen aimed at disrupting definitions of the situation – the ontological gerrymandering aimed at altering the discursive space – are all orientated towards something being the case rather than something specific, presupposing a moral or strategic asymmetry between the two possibilities.

If we accept that, based upon the more two-sided version conception of communication derived from Niklas Luhmann, both sides of a distinction utilised in communication can be observed by a second order observer, then we can view contrastive conjunctions as crossing points between the two sides of a given distinction, or as involved in the coupling and decoupling of distinctions.

For example, contrastive conjunctions can be used in an attempt to ensure that the speaker is observed as legitimate rather than illegitimate, by their claiming that they are not pro-, and are, in fact, anti-Saddam Hussein. Alternatively, they can facilitate a discursive movement from agreement over the negative moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein, to disagreement over the legality of invading Iraq, and the claim that moral evaluation is not sufficient to justify war. Whilst coupling the drawing of the two distinctions, and moving between the two, such a process decouples them conceptually – denying that the two distinctions can be de-differentiated, therefore affirming that they are different from one another.

Whilst the complexity involved and implied by such a process is partially resistant to the difficulties resulting from any coercive pressure to agree upon moral evaluation – agreeing with it, but also claiming its irrelevance, or at least its insufficiency – it also plays a reconstitutive role in relation to that difficulty. It leaves unquestioned the need – the incitement – to affirm a negative moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein. Whilst partly resisting it, it can also be argued to affirm it, contributing to a sense of consensus, and therefore is

complicit in (re)circulating the incitement. Some of the techniques available for pursuing legitimacy therefore nevertheless also draw the contributors resisting them into what may be a disadvantageous discursive position for them – resulting in their making concessions to their opponents and bringing them into partial agreement with them. As we saw in several of the chapters, the extent to which they seem to share evaluations with their opponents – on the need to support the troops, or on the moral evaluation of Saddam Hussein and yet disagree on what should follow, can lead to their being perceived as inconsistent, confused, or as trying to have their cake and eat it.

#### **13.2.4. Triangulation**

In several of the chapters I noted the way in which some contributors positioned themselves in relation to more than one thing with their statements. They were not simply choosing a side, but also positioning themselves in relation to other people on the same side – clarifying their degree of attachment to the others on that side.

This double movement is similar in operation to the coupling and decoupling significance of contrastive conjunctions, representing the pursuit of legitimacy in contrast to less legitimate, less reasonable contributors on the same side. The contributor who engages in such triangulation pursues legitimacy as anti-war but anti-Saddam, or as anti-war but pro-American at the expense of those that they portray as anti-war and pro-Saddam or anti-war and anti-American. That is, they negatively evaluate what are their context-specific allies, and rely upon identifying their difference from such allies who are, in contrast, less reasonable, and not theoretically open to persuasion.

Arguably, therefore, this approach does nothing to significantly undermine the illegitimacy of a particular accusation, or the process of making accusations more generally, since it is directly reliant upon such accusation. Moreover, it raises questions about what it means to be positioned on the same side as other groups or individuals – how does the strength of a contributor's attachment to the others with whom they broadly position themselves on an issue manifest itself in



their contributions more generally? How temporary, and how specific, are contemporary political, social and cultural alliances?

### 13.3. *Confluent Alliances, Confluent Enmity?*

One issue which I have implied but not addressed directly so far relates to the significance of having a ‘coalition’ – having a context-specific alliance between people who may strongly disagree with one another in other contexts. This is something which was relatively prominent in this context, with both sides stressing the breadth and diversity of people on their side.

On both sides of the debate over Iraq, coalitions were assembled and prominently displayed. The ‘*coalition of the willing*’ eventually came together to support, and conduct, the invasion of Iraq, whilst the Stop the War *Coalition* campaigned against it. Within the controversy preceding war it was clear that the issue was considered culturally and politically unusual to the extent that the sides, the alignment of those for and against, was observed as impossible to understand based upon any simple left/right political distinction.

The apparent strangeness of the alliances involved was identified and mobilised by contributors to debate, and used as a resource to generate extra persuasive or moral force for their positions. If so many diverse people, many of whom were usually politically hostile to one another, could come together under one umbrella, on one side, then they should be taken seriously. For example, John Gummer [Conservative] noted the apparent strangeness, claiming that it deserved careful attention:

There comes a time in one’s life when one finds oneself in peculiar company. The feeling is probably mutual, and others will be as embarrassed as I, but that *should lead people to listen carefully to the group that has come together* to point out something that should be self-evident – that the case for military action against Iraq is yet unproven

(Hansard, 2003a: 309, emphasis added).

Whilst in one sense such ‘unexpected’ coming together is used ‘positively’, used as a resource, there is also a sense in which it can be problematic. Gummer implies a degree of embarrassment regarding those with whom he has positioned himself, and other contributions evince the way in which this serves to require more ‘negative’ or defensive discursive work. In a manner similar to the other triangulation I have discussed, there is a type of future-orientated concern with the threat of guilt-by-association which may need to be addressed.

### **13.3.1. Differentiating Oneself**

We have already encountered several examples in which people are involved in differentiating themselves from others with whom they are associated due to their position adopted in relation to invasion of Iraq – relatively left-wing journalists opposed to invasion differentiating themselves from allegedly more extreme opponents of war who were supposedly ‘anti-American’ or ‘pro-Saddam’, right-wing journalists who supported war differentiating themselves from the official WMD-related justification for it. Indeed, such approaches pursue legitimacy by contrasting themselves with other less legitimate members of the same side. They are agreed with in terms of a for/against orientation, but things are more complex and there are further differences that make a difference.

There are many examples of differentiating discourse in this context, with contributions directly intervening to ‘clarify’ (in the interested sense that I have already mentioned) the extent (or lack thereof) of their more general association with some of those on the same side of the debate as them. Such contributions provide evidence of a concern to control the way in which your relationship to your context-specific friends and enemies is understood.

In other contexts, such as the contemporary debates over the banning of hunting (foxes) with dogs, this differentiation can take on a wry or ironic tone. For example, intervening whilst Tony Banks [Labour], her opponent in almost any other context, was giving a

speech, Ann Widdecombe [Conservative] stated her gratitude to her ‘honourable and *strictly temporary* Friend’ (Hansard, 2003e: 46, emphasis added).

A much more venomous example, which personalises the animosity he claims to feel, comes from right-wing journalist Peter Hitchens who was opposed to invasion of Iraq:

I loathe being on the same side as all those dim, thoughtless Leftists who are always against war [...]

If Tony Benn and Archbishop Rowan Williams are both against a cause, then there must be something attractive about it

(*Mail on Sunday*, 29/12/02: 29).

Interestingly, this very issue – the concern with managing one’s context-specific allies, and its possible negative consequences – was also discussed by his brother in one of his many contributions to the debate:

It is important to beware of arguments that depend upon ‘the enemy of my enemy’, and it’s likewise important to be immune to the charges of keeping bad company [...]

If you pay too much attention to the shortcomings of your allies, or if you worry about being lumped together with dubious or unpopular types, you are in effect having your thinking done for you.

(Christopher Hitchens, *The Observer*, 25/8/02: 27).

Arguably both brothers, from their opposing locations on this issue, are, in part, attempting to make a virtue out of not allowing others to think for them, something again involved in the generation of moral force for their position. The negative associations, whilst they need to be disclaimed, can be put to good use and made a virtue by claiming that the person differentiating him- or her-self demonstrates a refusal to allow others to think for them – a claim that they are willing to speak what they consider to be right or truthful without being influenced by the details of which other people do or do not agree with them. As such, this resonates with Foucault’s (2001) conception of

the parrhesiastes, which I have already discussed in relation to Scott Ritter. Speaking from a 'difficult' position, and despite that difficulty, is portrayed as evidence of the importance and consequentiality of what is said – the difficulty should make sure that it is heard and taken seriously.

These types of differentiations, contrasts, and clarifications, are unlikely to be confined to this context, although the invasion of Iraq's particularly high degree of complexity may have intensified their significance. All such differentiations are strongly directed towards other contexts – the disclaiming of generalised associations with others, orientated towards avoiding an unwanted association with their position on other issues in other contexts.

The extent to which such apparently fractured groupings raises questions about the wider significance of unexpected alliances and the temporary basis of political friendship and enmity. Investigation of such questions would require engagement with communications produced in multiple contexts, looking for patterns of alignment, as well as communications avowing and disavowing of the strength of attachment of those so aligned. How far and in what ways can and do political and moral modalities undergo transformation and become repositioned?

### **13.3.2. Confluent Adversaries?**

Thinking about the process of political alignment, the way in which people line up on opposing sides, can direct our attention towards the work of Chantal Mouffe, and her writing for and against that of Carl Schmitt, who I have already mentioned occasionally.

Mouffe has argued that what is necessary for the realisation of a more radical form of liberal democratic politics, which is not undermined by the incompatibilities of liberalism and democracy, is a conception of 'adversaries' understood as enemies who (contrary to Schmitt) do not merit destruction, but who are instead viewed as legitimate and deserving of toleration (Mouffe, 1993: 4; 2000: 102). Such adversaries are paradoxical 'friendly enemies' who share a

common symbolic space, but want that space to be organised differently (Mouffe, 2000: 13).

Arguably this is similar to Durkheim's (1984: 54) argument that, under the division of labour, adversaries may nevertheless possess: 'some general sympathy which keeps their antagonism within bounds, tempering it'. However, Mouffe (2000: 102-3) conceives of the relation between adversaries as *agonistic* rather than *antagonistic* (which she claims is struggle between enemies in a more orthodox sense).

Whilst it is very interesting, and potentially useful for understanding the way in which there may be a high degree of overlap between political opponents, this approach does not explicitly provide a way of making sense of the dynamism that is implied by much of the differentiating discursive work evident in the context of the 'Iraq Crisis'.

An alternative approach is Bauman's (2002: 85) adaptation of Giddens (1992: 61-4) notion of 'confluent love' to make sense of the 'confluent enmity' and 'confluent alliances' arguably evident in the WoT in particular.

According to Giddens (1992: 61), confluent love is: 'contingent love, and therefore jars with the "for-ever", "one-and-only" qualities of the romantic love complex'. The complexity and flux of some aspects of contemporary social and political life can perhaps be understood through this notion of confluence – implying the existence of relatively temporary and highly contingent relationships of convenience – although this does not have to be restricted to the WoT.

It may be that the development of specific controversies fosters a type of gravitational field of moral polarization (Black, 1998: 131) in relation to the personnel involved, but they are not fixed for all time – the field is one that can to some degree be exited when it comes to another issue. However, there is not a single field with a single alignment but multiple ones, between which movement can occur and sides aligned differently.

The extent to which any instability resulting from such flux might contribute to a rather cynical and self-serving form of promiscuous politics is something deserving detailed exploration, based upon a much broader set of contexts, with a less restricted temporal gaze than that used in this project.

### **13.4. *The Communicative Career***

#### **13.4.1. Careering About?**

One concept that I floated into several of the chapters is that of the ‘communicative career’, something used to make sense of the way in which the way in which a person has previously been understood is consequential for the way in which they are observed again in this context. In several empirical chapters I noted how the communicative careers of George Galloway, Scott Ritter and Colin Powell were all highly consequential for the ways in which their contributions to the debate were understood, as well as other contributors invoked their history of positions in an attempt to legitimate their current position contrastively.

I think this notion of the communicative career requires a little clarification in order to address some likely misunderstandings. In particular, I do not take it to mean something that tells you anything about the person named as such. Consistent with my appropriation of Luhmann and Foucault we are not here concerned with an individual’s internal mental states. Rather it is intended to capture a sense of their history of public positions, their ‘track record’ (which itself may be a matter of controversy, of observed in different ways) as understood in the media, and political systems – the way that they have been observed, the way that they have built up a pattern of associations, positions, and evaluations over time.

In this regard, the notion of a ‘career’ seems appropriate since it implies both a sense of development over time, but also admits the possibility that this development does not have a single trajectory. The concept does not preclude a relatively high degree of lateral movement – the possibility of some significant ‘careering about’,

including fairly radical transformations. Indeed, if some version of confluence in relation to alliances and enmity is increasing in importance, then we might expect people to be observed as increasingly engaged in much such careering about.

#### **13.4.2. Conversion**

The possibility of radical change also makes relevant the metaphor of conversion as a tool through which significant such changes may be understood. I have already noted the way in which alleged converts can be used in attempts to bolster the case of the side they join – ‘see how our arguments have convinced a former opponent’ – as well as some of the ambivalence that results from the different way that they are likely to be observed by the group left behind (as a traitor).

We can enquire into the extent to which such positive and negative evaluations depend upon the stability of the relationship between the groups involved, or ask how large or intense a transformation has to be before it is described as a conversion? Should we conceive of a conversion as ‘a true political act’ in Žižek’s (2003: 39) sense of an action that significantly ‘changes the coordinates of the situation’ – creating wider irritations or shock waves. How does it require realignment of other positions, and what sort of defensive discursive work might it incite from the group left behind?

One possible approach to understanding the issues associated with this would be to study some examples where controversial or radical changes are observed to have taken place. These could be in a religious context, but also in relation to a political organisation’s observed change of direction in policy, or high-profile political defections, or even other less obviously ‘Political’ contexts such as the transfer of footballers or football managers between rival clubs (for example Sol Campbell’s movement between Tottenham and Arsenal, or Harry Redknapp moving from Portsmouth to Southampton), and the way in which they are criticised and justified. What affects the way in which a conversion is observed?

### 13.5. *Phases of Refolding or Reflection*

In relation to the developmental logic that we might associate with a 'career', it might be tempting to consider whether or not various accusations and the disclaimers used to resist them themselves go through stages or phases of development. Might there be some sort of pattern regarding the reflexivity involved? The quotation, drawn from a work of fiction, at the start of this chapter implies one possible way of conceiving of their development, in that case the denial of being a Rosicrucian.

The initial task in such a project would be to attempt to isolate the different discursive techniques or movements which can be observed, and based upon the contents of this thesis, and a little inference in trying to isolate the different processes, they might look something like this:

- The making of a statement about something
- Interventions making such a statement problematic and the circulation of its morally problematic status
- Straight denial that it applies
- Reversal – it is the accusers who are morally problematic
- The process of accusation is itself illegitimate
- Disclaiming an accusation whilst providing evidence
- Disclaiming is described as problematic – '*well you would deny it*'

It is clear that deciding upon some sense of order of development, even for the purposes of analytical abstraction, is less than clear.

It might be possible to connect them up with Baudrillard's (1983: 11-3) developmental logic relating to simulation, and whilst I am not put unduly put off by some of the ethical implications of his work, I think it important to retain some of messiness and complexity of the situation by refraining from forcing things to be neat.



Whilst some of these moments, movements, or techniques listed above logically precede others – the rendering of something as problematic is obviously a precondition for evasive discursive work being ‘necessary’ – it is probably better to think of them as eventually ending up as co-present techniques, which may be incited or drawn upon variously by contributors. Nevertheless, it may be possible to identify some very general tendencies, and in a contemporary discursive context, the disclaiming of racism via the statement ‘I am not a racist but’ is clearly at the stage where it is itself automatically rendered somewhat suspect (van Dijk, 1991, 1992).

In the Introduction I advanced the hope that some of the insights developed from this thesis might assist those marginalised by the processes of accusation – those excluded by it – and help them to develop more effective techniques of engaging with and resisting such marginalisation. Whilst I have not been assessing the degree of success of particular techniques, other than in a highly speculative or hypothetical way, at least one technique can be identified as unlikely to be successful in radically altering things in the long-term. Reversal – claiming that the accusers are the ones afflicted by whatever illegitimate influence is allegedly in operation – in particular would seem to be unlikely to be effective in the long term because it does nothing to undermine the significance of a given accusation since it is reliant upon the negative moral evaluation that is being resisted for its efficacy. It therefore reconfirms that evaluation as potentially available for future mobilisation.

This thesis has blended together some aspects of the work of Foucault and Luhmann with insights from a variety of discourse analytic approaches to make sense of the circulation of and resistance to some of the moral asymmetrical distinctions, and the associated illegitimate identities they mobilised, which were observable in the context of the public debate surrounding the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

It has identified a series of approaches used to problematise some of the central accusations of illegitimacy circulated, many of which were offshoots of disclaiming or ontological gerrymandering. The significance of each such accusation was explored in depth through the use of a large number of examples drawn from the public debates in the UK parliament, and the British national daily press.

Amongst other things, the analysis of the examples undertaken has hopefully made a minor contribution to showing how even approaches emerging from a broadly anti-, or at least non-, humanist position can nevertheless be used to make sense of human experience, since it arguably provides some tools through which people can make sense of the way in which the discursive space into which they make contributions is reduced and squeezed around them.

The high degree of recursivity or reflexivity that has apparently been involved in the 'Iraq Crisis' makes it tempting to reach for a concept such as the 'double hermeneutic', since disclaiming is clearly a first-order as well as a second-order issue according to Giddens' (1984: 284) understanding – as many examples included here have indicated, actors themselves orientate towards it as a way of making sense of contributions to debate.

If some of the insights generated by this thesis were to be appropriated and incorporated into political discourse, there are some possibilities that I would think highly unlikely. At least one prediction can be advanced with a relatively high degree of certainty. Contrary to the implications of the rather humorous quotation at the start of this chapter, I think it highly unlikely that avoidance of accusations of anti-Americanism, or appeasement, or whatever, will ever be best pursued via the curious double bluff of directly embracing the label that is in circulation!

Although such an approach might have an initially rather disruptive impact, due to its being highly unexpected, it would soon be robbed of any radical potential, and once rendered problematic, if utilised, would soon tend to be followed by a 'but...'

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## **15. Appendix**

### ***Iraq - Chronology of Some Key Events***

**1917**

Ottoman Empire relinquishes control of Baghdad to Britain.

**1932**

Iraq granted independence from Britain.

**1968**

*July*

A coup sees the Ba'ath party take control of Iraq. Ahmad Hassan al Bakr becomes president, with Saddam Hussein his deputy.

**1979**

*16<sup>th</sup> July*

Saddam Hussein replaces al Bakr as president of Iraq .

*18<sup>th</sup> July*

Infamous video footage is shot of the public 'trial' of members of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council accused of a plot against the leadership. Saddam Hussein reads out a list of names, and the accused are taken outside and executed.

**1980**

*22<sup>nd</sup> September*

After a border dispute, the Iran-Iraq War starts with Iraqi air strikes against Iranian air bases.

**1988**

*16<sup>th</sup> March*

Iraq uses chemical weapons against the Kurdish town of Halabjah.

*20<sup>th</sup> August*

Iran-Iraq War ceasefire comes into effect.

**1990**

*2<sup>nd</sup> August*

Iraq Invades Kuwait.

UNSCR 660 condemns the invasion

*7<sup>th</sup> August*

Coalition begins to deploy military forces in the Gulf region.

*25<sup>th</sup> August*

UN authorises military force to enforce sanctions against Iraq.

*29<sup>th</sup> November*

UNSCR 678 – authorisation of ‘all necessary means’ to liberate Kuwait if Iraq does not withdraw before 15<sup>th</sup> January 1991.

**1991**

*16<sup>th</sup> January*

US-led coalition begins Operation Desert Storm.

*27-28<sup>th</sup> February*

Hostilities end with the coalition having liberated Kuwait.

*3<sup>rd</sup> March*

Iraq accepts terms of ceasefire – Gulf War ends.

*3<sup>rd</sup> April*

UNSCR 687 – cease-fire resolution requiring Iraq to destroy WMD programmes under the scrutiny of UN and IAEA inspections, as well as recognise the Kuwaiti border and return POWs.

*6<sup>th</sup> April*

Iraq accepts UNSCR 687.

*17<sup>th</sup> June*

UNSCR 699 – Iraq’s liability for UNSCOM costs established.

*15<sup>th</sup> August*

UNSCR 707 – condemning Iraq’s non-compliance, reasserting the need for complete disclosure of all WMD programmes and unrestricted access for UN inspectors.

*October*

UNSCR 715 – approving UNSCOM/IAEA plans for ongoing monitoring arrangements to implement 687

**1993**

*July*

Inspection process begins.

*November*

Iraq accedes to inspection teams requirements.

**1995**

*14<sup>th</sup> April*

UNSCR 986 – the ‘Oil-for-food’ programme is established, allowing Iraq to export oil in order to purchase food and medicine.

**1996**

*27<sup>th</sup> March*

UNSCR 1051 – Approval of import/export monitoring.

*12<sup>th</sup> June*

UNSCR 1060 – condemning Iraq’s refusal to grant full access to UN inspectors which violated 687, 707, and 715.

**1997**

*21<sup>st</sup> June*

UNSCR 1115 – condemning the denial of access, and demanding immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access.

*23<sup>rd</sup> October*

UNSCR 1134 – condemning Iraqi restrictions of access to inspection sights as a ‘flagrant’ violation of all previous resolutions (five Security Council members abstain).

*12<sup>th</sup> November*

UNSCR 1137 – condemning Iraqi non-compliance.

**1998**

*February*

Iraq ceases completely cooperation with UN inspections. US and UK threaten military action as a response.

*20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> February*

Kofi Annan visits Iraq leading to an agreement on the procedures for the inspection of so-called presidential sites – what became known as the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’.

*2<sup>nd</sup> March*

UNSCR 1154 – endorsing the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ and describing the consequences for Iraq if it is violated.

*5<sup>th</sup> March*

The return of UN inspectors to Iraq, and resumption of their inspection activities.

*5<sup>th</sup> August*

Iraq announces the suspension of cooperation with IAEA and UNSCOM.

*9<sup>th</sup> September*

UNSCR 1194 – rejecting Iraqi claims that the conditions of UNSCR 687 should be modified, and condemning persistent non-cooperation.

*31<sup>st</sup> October*

Iraq withdraws cooperation with UNSCOM.

*5<sup>th</sup> November*

UNSCR 1205 – condemning the end of cooperation, and again demanding ‘immediate, complete and unconditional cooperation’.

*14<sup>th</sup> November*

US and UK governments authorise air strikes against Iraq, but such action is averted when Iraq claims willingness to comply with UN requirements.

*16<sup>th</sup> December*

UNSCOM withdraws from Iraq.

*16-19<sup>th</sup> December*

US and UK governments launch ‘Operation Desert Fox’ – allied air strikes on suspected WMD sites.

**1999**

*10<sup>th</sup> January*

The Iraqi parliament calls for an end to cooperation until the sanctions regime is lifted

*17<sup>th</sup> December*

UNSCR 1284 passed – disbanding UNSCOM and replacing it with UNMOVIC.

**2000**

*7<sup>th</sup> November*

George W. Bush is elected 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the USA amid very controversial circumstances relating to the ballot procedures in Florida.

*13<sup>th</sup> December*

Al Gore withdraws his challenge to the Presidential election result.

**2001**

*20<sup>th</sup> January*

Inauguration of George W. Bush

*11<sup>th</sup> September*

Attacks on Pentagon and World Trade Centre.

*20<sup>th</sup> September*

George W. Bush's infamous 'with us or with the terrorists' speech

*28<sup>th</sup> September*

UNSCR 1373 – Reaffirming the UN's condemnation of 9-11, and calling for international cooperation in the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

*7<sup>th</sup> October*

The US and UK begin air strikes against Afghanistan

*13<sup>th</sup> November*

The Northern Alliance takes Kabul

**2002**

*29<sup>th</sup> January*

George W. Bush's State of the Union speech identifies Iraq as a member of the 'axis of evil'.

*14<sup>th</sup> May*

UNSCR 1409 – reaffirming previous resolutions and adjusting the list of items available under UNSCR 986.

*9<sup>th</sup> September*

International Institute of Strategic Studies publishes a strategic report on Iraq's WMD.

*12<sup>th</sup> September*

George W. Bush begins to publicly make the case for war in an address at UN General Assembly, challenging the UN to act to implement disarmament.

*16<sup>th</sup> September*

Iraq claims willingness to accept inspectors' unconditional return.

*24<sup>th</sup> September*

UK government publishes its dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (UK Government, 2002).

*8<sup>th</sup> November*

Passage of UNSCR 1441 requiring reintroduction of UN inspectors (UNMOVIC) and granting Iraq a 'final opportunity' to comply with previous resolutions.

*25<sup>th</sup> November*

UNSCR 1443 – reaffirming 1409.

*4<sup>th</sup> December*

UNSCR 1447 – reaffirming UNSCR 986.

*7<sup>th</sup> December*

Iraq submits a 12,000 page declaration on WMD as required by UNSCR 1441.

*19<sup>th</sup> December*

Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei informally brief UN Security Council on the Iraqi declaration and inspections process.

*30<sup>th</sup> December*

UNSCR 1454 – adjusting the goods available under UNSCR 986.

**2003**

*9<sup>th</sup> January*

Blix and El-Baradei brief the UN Security Council.

*11<sup>th</sup> January*

British forces leave for the Gulf, lead by aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal.

*27<sup>th</sup> January*

Blix and El-Baradei brief the Council on the inspection process in relation to UNSCR 1441.

*3<sup>rd</sup> February*

Publication of the UK Government's 'dodgy dossier' on Iraq's efforts and infrastructure to conceal WMD.

*5<sup>th</sup> February*

Colin Powell's presentation to the UN.

*14<sup>th</sup> February*

Blix and El-Baradei brief an informal session of the Security Council.

*15<sup>th</sup> February*

Massive, co-ordinated anti-war demonstrations occur worldwide.



*26<sup>th</sup> February*

121 Labour MPs rebel in a Commons vote on Iraq.

*1<sup>st</sup> March*

Turkish parliament refuses US permission to use Turkish air space or be stationed inside Turkey.

*7<sup>th</sup> March*

Blix and El-Baradei brief the Security Council.

US and UK abandon plans for a second UNSCR.

*16<sup>th</sup> March*

The Azores Summit – Bush, Blair and Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar meet to discuss their next move.

*17<sup>th</sup> March*

Diplomatic process at UN abandoned completely. Bush issues an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein – leave Iraq within 48 hours with your sons or face invasion. UN evacuates UNMOVIC inspectors from Iraq. Robin Cook resigns from the UK government

*18<sup>th</sup> March*

Saddam Hussein rejects the ultimatum.

Key House of Commons vote. Government wins support for invasion by a margin of 396-217, with 139 Labour rebels.

*19<sup>th</sup> March*

Hans Blix delivers his final inspection report to the UNSC.

*20<sup>th</sup> March*

War/invasion (Operation Iraqi Freedom) begins in the form of a bombing campaign – ‘Shock and Awe’.

*28<sup>th</sup> March*

UNSCR 1472 – recognising the ‘occupying powers’ and their responsibilities in relation to the people of Iraq and the provision of humanitarian aid.

*9<sup>th</sup> April*

Toppling of Statue of Saddam Hussein in central square of Baghdad.

*1<sup>st</sup> May*

Bush visits the US aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and declares an end to ‘major combat operations’.

*22<sup>nd</sup> May*

UNSCR 1483 – encouraging the efforts of the Iraqi people to form a representative government, and welcoming the humanitarian provision and other aid.

*29<sup>th</sup> May*

Andrew Gilligan's broadcast on Radio Four accusing UK government of 'sexing up' first dossier.

Tony Blair visits Iraq

*6<sup>th</sup> July*

BBC Governors announce their full backing for Gilligan

*9<sup>th</sup> July*

Gilligan's source is revealed to be Dr David Kelly

*15<sup>th</sup> July*

Dr David Kelly's appearance before the Foreign Affairs Committee

*18<sup>th</sup> July*

Body of Dr David Kelly found.

*11<sup>th</sup> August*

Hutton Inquiry into the Death of Dr David Kelly begins.

*14<sup>th</sup> August*

UNSCR 1500 – welcoming the establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council, and establishing the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

*11<sup>th</sup> September*

Intelligence Committee Report published saying September dossier 'unbalanced' but not 'sexed up'.

*16<sup>th</sup> October*

UNSCR 1511 – reaffirming 1483 and 1373, stressing the sovereignty of the Iraqi people, condemning terrorist bombings and urging the drafting of an Iraqi constitution.

*24<sup>th</sup> November*

UNSCR 1518 – noting that the situation in Iraq is a threat to international peace and security.

*13<sup>th</sup> December*

Saddam Hussein found.

**2004**

*28<sup>th</sup> January*

Hutton Report (Hutton, 2004) clears government of wrongdoing, and heavily criticises the BBC, leading to the resignations of Chairman Gavin Davies and eventually the removal of Director General Greg Dyke.

At a Senate Committee meeting, David Kay claims everyone was almost completely wrong in believing Saddam had stockpiles of WMD.

*3<sup>rd</sup> February*

Butler Inquiry announced.

*21<sup>st</sup> April*

UNSCR 1538 – announcing formation of a high-level inquiry into allegations of corruption in the management of the UN ‘Oil-for-food’ programme.

*8<sup>th</sup> June*

UNSCR 1546 – positively anticipating Iraq’s transition to democracy.

*28<sup>th</sup> June*

Coalition hands over ‘sovereignty’ to Iraqi Governing Council, two days earlier than planned.

*14<sup>th</sup> July*

Butler Report released (Butler *et al.*, 2004).

*12<sup>th</sup> August*

UNSCR 1557 – extending the mandate of UNAMI for 12 months.

*October*

Publication of ISG interim report into Iraq’s WMD.

*8<sup>th</sup> November*

Operation Phantom Fury – US attack on Fallujah.

*21<sup>st</sup> December*

Tony Blair visits Baghdad.

**2005**

*12<sup>th</sup> January*

Announcement that the Iraqi Survey Group was leaving Iraq and preparing its final report, to be delivered spring 2005.

*30<sup>th</sup> January*

Elections held in Iraq.

- For a more detailed account of the inspections process between 1993 and early 1999, see Trevan (1999: 393-416).
- Full details of all UN Security Council Resolutions relating to Iraq can be accessed from: [www.un.org/docs/unsc\\_resolutions.html](http://www.un.org/docs/unsc_resolutions.html)

