
**Surveying the Battlefield:
Mapping the different arguments and positions of the Iraq War debate
through Frame Analysis¹**

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Abstract

The Iraq War was a multidimensional controversy taking in issues of strategy, security, international law and morality. Building on this observation, the first part of this paper proposes a template to capture and explain the ways in which those issues played out on both sides of the argument. However for the active antagonists in the debate it was not enough to have a position on each of these concerns – they had to be woven together into a consistent and coherent narrative as they saw it. Out of this, the different schools of thought from the Neo-Conservatives to the Antiwar radicals emerged. This is the focus of the second part of this paper. By outlining the frames and the schools of thought that emerged from them, this paper proposes a model that moves us beyond the one-dimensional 'for or against' way of looking at the controversy.

Introduction

It may have been a cliché, but in labelling the Iraq War as ‘a battle for hearts and minds’ the US Administration pointed to some of the defining features of the arguments that flared up, and the propaganda campaigns that were conjured up, over this most controversial of wars. The phrase draws our attention to the truism that the war engaged public opinion in the UK (and around the world) on a moral, perhaps even emotional level, all the way through to embracing a set of arguments that took on a highly rationalised set of considerations – thereby engaging both the heart and the head. Amongst other matters, ‘moral/emotional’ arguments centred around such questions as whether the war was really necessary; and arguments about the number of people likely to be killed in war – specifically, would more people be killed through launching military action, or ultimately would more people be killed by leaving Saddam Hussein in power? By contrast the keywords and phrases of a ‘rationalised’ discourse spoke the language of strategy, security, and the geopolitical complexities of the Middle East. The ‘hearts and minds’ metaphor also has the great virtue of reminding us

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that in any propaganda campaign, whether making a case for or against war, success – the matter of winning over people’s consent – is not just a matter of persuading people to appreciate the case that they’re making and to agree with it in the abstract, but would also aim to get people to believe in it. And in the case of this conflict many people formed strong, passionately held convictions on the matter. That then is another sense in which the battle to persuade was a battle for the heart as well as the head. As both a short cut through to highlighting the multidimensional nature of the controversy over the Iraq War, and as a headline for grabbing our attention, the ‘hearts and minds’ metaphor has much to commend it.

Limitations of the ‘Hearts and Minds’ metaphor

Yet there are problems with the metaphor. The pre-war question of Iraq’s putative (and, as it turned out, non-existent) Weapons of Mass Destruction programme, for example, may at first seem to belong to the ‘rationalised’ set of security orientated discourses. Yet the issue could also be phrased in an emotive way by stirring up fears among Western publics. Indeed many critics of the war alleged that this is precisely what happened (*New Statesman* 2003a, b).

Furthermore, as an analytical concept the distinction between hearts and minds lacks precision. One might question whether the distinction between rational and moral argumentation is entirely valid in the first place; whether that distinction might be hierarchical; and whether it could be prone to establishing misconceptions. On the first point, is ethics not a branch of philosophy? And can’t morality and our emotions be discussed in a rational manner? On the second, the implicit hierarchies depend on our disposition. For those rooted in enlightenment thinking rational arguments would be privileged; for those of a romantic disposition it would be the other way round; while there are others who refuse to fully identify with either camp. So, in a direct challenge to Jurgen Habermas’s highly rationalised normative ideal of the public sphere (1989), critics, such as Simon Cottle (2006: 47-49) argue that an emotional engagement with political issues, is, up to a point, healthy for public debate. Finally, and building on this line of reasoning, the supposed distinction between hearts and minds is problematic because it risks characterising rational arguments as heartless, and moral arguments as possibly rash and ill-thought out. In this paper I shall argue that a more productive alternative can be found from within frame analysis theory and research, specifically the ‘packaging’ approach most closely identified with William Gamson and Andre Modigliani’s (1989) research,² because of the way it offers a more useful and precise way of conceptualising the various controversies over the Iraq conflict without resort to categorisations that may be prone to a priori value judgements.

Of packages and frames

Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) research is into the public debate over nuclear power during the first four decades of post-war America. They do not start from a position of taking a stance on the vexed question of whether or not nuclear power is a 'good thing', and nor do they attempt to resolve that matter throughout the course of their article. Instead they start from the observation that discourses on nuclear power are replete with a range of 'metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, moral appeals, and other symbolic devices' (Ibid.: 2). According to their reasoning, we experience these not as disparate elements without connection, but as a cluster of ideas *packaged* together. At the 'core' of the package, holding the cluster together, lies the frame, defined by Gamson and Modigliani as 'the central organising idea ... for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue' (Ibid.: 3). Academics have yet to reach a consensus about whether framing 'is simply a metaphor' or whether framing amounts to something more than that (Deacon et al, 2007: 162). Nonetheless as a metaphor the most appropriate is that of the framework of a building: it structures the building's overall shape and gives some indication as to its likely purpose, but tells us nothing about the inner furnishings of the building. In other words, frames are concerned with the overall principles guiding the formation of different interpretations of the issues in the public domain rather than being preoccupied with the details of policy proposals. It is however, possible to be more specific about how these principles function. Robert Entman (1993) points the way. In the case of the social problems and foreign policy challenges, which is where most framing research has been concentrated, Entman argues that frames work to 'promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (Ibid.: 52). Meanwhile Shanto Iyengar (1991), has, through empirical research, drawn attention to the personalisation of public issues. This adds to our understanding of how frames suggest moral judgements and treatment recommendations, because the overriding questions become a matter of identifying who is responsible for having created these problems in the first place and also who is responsible for solving those problems. Finally, in a society that is, according to the 'risk society' thesis (see Beck 1992), increasingly conscious of the dangers it faces and so in consequence organised towards averting those dangers and being able to cope with them should they arise, questions about the assessments of the risks involved may well be a part of the 'problem definition' aspect of framing. These insights from Entman, Iyengar, and the 'risk society' thesis then, ought to be among the core framing questions capable of making packages cohere.

Strictly speaking, it may well be that packages of the kind that Gamson and Modigliani suggest are artefacts of the research – devised rather than identified by the researchers. Be that as it may, it ought not to preclude the possibility of the proposed packages having an ecological validity that is, at the very least, of

sufficient fidelity to serve as useful heuristic devices, thereby allowing us to explore the various positions on any given controversy.

When Gamson and Modigliani identified/constructed a series of packages outlining the various interpretations of the nuclear power issue and contributions to the debate over it, they argued that *some* packages inevitably lend themselves more readily to one side of the argument than others. The idea of nuclear power as ‘progress’ for example, is generally seen as making a case for nuclear power, whereas the ‘soft paths’ package emphasising environmental concerns often forms the basis of arguments against nuclear power. It would, however, be a mistake to reduce the packages to that level. Far more valuable is that we should understand the various positions involved. One of the great virtues of this model is that frames can be taken to imply ‘a range of positions, rather than a single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame’ (Ibid: 1989: 3). That is as it should be, since it is so often the case that differences of opinion will break out within political parties or the same school of thought. At other times though, different positions may well be based on different packages.

Unanswered questions

There is not the space available in this paper to give due consideration to how, at a theoretical level, frames function as the ‘central organising ideas’ of the packages. Other questions such as whether framing is just a metaphor or whether it amounts to something more than that, sadly, will also have to remain unexplored. Nor is there the space available to evaluate the different implications that can be found across a range of definitions of framing concerning whether frames ultimately reside in the collective consciousness without our awareness of principles upholding them as Erving Goffman (1974) is inclined to argue; whether they are best seen as journalistic devices as suggested by Todd Gitlin (1980), Gadi Wolfsfeld (1997), and Stephen Reese (2003); or whether frames are most appropriately understood as purposely manufactured by what may broadly be defined as ‘political players’ (Callaghan and Schell 2001: 185) to promote a particular political agenda. Ultimately though, perhaps it is best if definitions of framing avoid making assumptions about their origins and the levels of intent behind them. Frames may be useful to journalists and ‘political players’ alike, but the extent to which either set of agents are conscious of manufacturing frames – if indeed that can be distinguished from taping into them – is not a matter about which a priori generalisations should be made. This is especially so since frame analysis can be applied to a range of texts from manifesto documents, to speeches, to fictional television programmes, as well as news reports, (in spite of the tendency among researchers adopting the framing paradigm to concentrate on the latter).

So, in keeping with Gamson and Modigliani's objectives, the ambitions of this paper are a) to identify the different packages in the debate over the Iraq War, including by giving due consideration to the questions that Entman's and Iyengar's research and the 'risk society' thesis prompt; b) to explore how they build up and contribute to the different positions on the war; and c) to then consider how these different positions relate to each other thereby mapping out the terrain of the debate in the controversy. The paper shall then proceed to explore some of the questions for media research that the model invites.

Principles for the development of frames on the Iraq War

As Gamson and Modigliani point out, packages, in the sense that they conceptualise them, are not simple matters of for-or-against as polarised arguments can and will be played out within the parameters of a single package. And, like nuclear power, the Iraq War was a multidimensional controversy taking in a number of different issues. In the schemata I propose in this paper, the issues involved have been condensed down to four areas of contestation/concern: security, international law, morality, and opportunity. Furthermore when discussing the controversy it has proven to be fruitful to divide each of those four areas up into for-and-against arguments thereby leaving us with eight distinct packages. So the 'pro-war security' package seeks to outline the security-orientated arguments that those in favour of military action tended to make, i.e. that military action against Iraq will make us safer. Against this, the antiwar security package makes the case that military action will actually be counter-productive by undermining national and international security. Within both arguments, then, security is the terrain of the debate.

As an intensely and passionately debated multidimensional controversy, each of the main protagonists in the debate had to address each of the main issues, even if that something was dismissive downplaying the significance of those concerns. The packages however do not have a life of their own. They will often trade in, be built on, and be traceable through, pre-existing political philosophies regarding international affairs. But it would still be profoundly mistaken to conceive of the packages as though they were simply options from a ready-made menu that the different 'political players' involved in the debate (individuals, campaigners, political parties, social movements, and even media commentators) simply made a selection from, picking the package they agreed with the most. Instead many of the main protagonists should be understood as having contributed towards the *construction* of these packages, as they attempted to interpret the issues, their causes, make moral evaluations etc., even if they only did so with a view to either arriving at or reinforcing a pre-determined 'treatment recommendation' in relation to the crisis.

Given the complexities of the issues it is not surprising that we should have seen the emergence of a number of distinct schools of thought on both sides of the argument. So, on the pro-war side differences of opinion and emphasis emerged over what the best reasons for justifying the war were, what they hoped it would achieve, and what they felt the priorities were. Likewise on the antiwar side different shades of opinion were identifiable over what the main arguments against the war were and thus which arguments they should emphasise. These were the things that made the different schools of thought distinctive. And this is what moves our understanding of the debate surrounding the Iraq War beyond the one-dimensionality of the pollster's 'for-or-against' question, as well as taking our understanding past long-standing clichés about 'hawks' and 'doves' – inadequate labels because they fail to explore the objectives and the reasoning behind those positions.

The different packages:

First of all let us outline the eight different packages. The frames were identified inductively through a process of emersion in the literature and materials of the actors involved, just Gamson and Modigliani (1989) did and as is commonplace with this kind of research (Deacon et al 2007). In my case it has also been complimented by a total of 38 recorded interviews with representatives from locally based antiwar groups. These were conducted from June 2006 onwards and lasted an average of 75 minutes. The journalist Nick Cohen was also interviewed for this research to articulate the 'Liberal Hawk' position that will be outlined later.

Area of concern: Security

Package: Pro-War Security orientated arguments

The pro-war security package is premised on the notion that the Western world faces a real threat that can only be dealt with militarily. The threat is said to come from both Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) – the existence of which was (according to this package) not in doubt during the run-up to the invasion or immediately afterwards, *and* also from Al Qaeda. 'Neo-Conservative' advocates of this package were also adamant that there were links between Saddam's Iraq and Al Qaeda. Officially the British government, being more doubtful on the matter, tried to side step that question.

Uniting these different interpretations of the security package however, was an unashamedly hawkish attitude. This didn't just apply to the threat posed by Al Qaeda or an allegedly WMD armed Iraq, but to all potential adversaries. 'Extremism', 'terrorism', and 'rogue states' were not antagonised by injustice emanating from the influence of the Western world. Instead, it was argued, that

those aforementioned 'enemies of freedom' were born of and emboldened by displays of weakness by the West, particularly the United States (see Carruthers 2004). The only qualification to this that was sometimes admitted was that absence of democracy in the Arab world might have been a recruiting sergeant for 'terrorism' and 'extremism'. At this point the pro-war security orientated arguments joined with pro-war moral and opportunity packages (to be outlined shortly) to make the case that war on Iraq will encourage democracy, or at least a move towards more open societies, throughout the Arab world.

Fig 1:

	Pro-War Security
Problem definition?	Threat is real, security (re)established through military action
Causal interpretation?	Enemies emboldened by displays of weakness
Moral Evaluation?	(Not necessarily applicable. Best addressed under morality)
Who is to blame?	Saddam, Al Qaeda
Who has the solution?	A US led 'coalition of the willing'
Risks?	Less than allowing a WMD armed Saddam
Treatment Recommendation?	Invasion to achieve disarmament through regime change

Package: Antiwar Security orientated arguments:

Advocates of the antiwar security package were far more uncertain and, as a collective, divided on the question of whether or not Iraq possessed any WMD. Nonetheless the predominant position on the matter among those who articulated this package was that the best way to a) find out, and b) to prevent Iraq from ever acquiring them in the future was through UN led weapons inspections and monitoring. Links between Iraq and Al Qaeda meanwhile were strongly doubted.

Also key to understanding this package is the argument that invasion and occupation can only sow the seeds of anarchy and resentment acting as the best recruiting campaign for Islamic 'terrorism' there could possibly be. Some predicted that the anarchic chaos of post-war Iraq would breed more 'terrorists' from within just as a swamp breeds mosquitoes (Chomsky 2002). Post-invasion one of the most commonplace metaphors has been that the presence of US forces occupying Iraq have, in effect, acted as a magnet attracting 'terrorists' from across the Middle East and perhaps even further a field (Guardian 2003b). While the argument that UK involvement in the war would invite a 'terrorist' backlash against UK targets, was both a pre-war prediction, and has been a recurrent post-war argument.

Instead, advocates of this package argued, we would do far more to combat 'extremism' by building peace, most urgently over the Israel-Palestine dispute (Chomsky 2002).

Looking to the longer term, the package asserts that global security must be established collectively by working through a system of international law and the UN (although some may wish to see reform of those institutions). This is the only practical way to ensure that the 'ownership' of WMD is severely restricted so that they don't fall into hands of either 'terrorists' or 'rogue states.' More generally this is the only effective way to achieve security. The package asserts that by contrast, to abandon the principles of international law by launching a pre-emptive war can only erode our moral authority and through that our ability to act in times of crisis. Taken on its own the morality of this package could be regarded as self-interested. From the point of view of some antiwar radicals this was problematic because they often preferred to build their case around purely moral objections to military action. As we shall see however, other opponents of the war interpreted this package in ways that (they felt) sat more comfortably alongside their moral objections to the war.

Fig 2:

Antiwar security	
Problem definition?	Threat may be real but is containable. War will provoke terrorism, and may lead to a prolonged occupation.
Causal interpretation?	(Not necessarily applicable. The focus is on the risks and alternatives)
Moral Evaluation?	(Not necessarily applicable. Best addressed under morality)
Who is to blame?	No blame is necessarily ascribed under this package
Who has the solution?	UN weapons inspectors
Risks?	Of provoking terrorism, of being sucked into an avoidable war and a prolonged occupation.
Treatment Recommendation?	Continued inspections

Area of concern: International Law

Package: International law interpreted from a Pro-war perspective

Not all proponents of the invasion of Iraq held international law in high regard, but there were some elements of pro-war community who specifically made a case

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for the invasion of Iraq on the basis of their interpretations of international law. At a minimum they argued that the invasion was justified under international law on the basis of Iraq's failure/refusal to fully co-operate with the inspections process. And in some cases they argued that the authority of the UN rested on taking decisive action against Saddam. The various reports by Hans Blix and the Mohammed El Baradei to the UN Security Council were interpreted in this light, while any moves towards co-operation and disarmament that Iraq may have made, such as their dismantling of Al-Samoud missiles, were seen as being no more than superficial gestures.

On a more general level, some advocates of this package argued that security and human rights could only be secured through the UN and international law.

Fig 3:

Pro-War International Law	
Problem definition?	An obligation to disarm Iraq under International law
Causal interpretation?	Saddam's non-compliance with UN resolutions calling on him to disarm
Moral Evaluation?	Saddam's breach of International Law
Who is to blame?	Saddam
Who has the solution?	A US led 'coalition of the willing'
Risks?	A greater risk than war would be that Saddam's refusal to disarm undermines the UN and International Law
Treatment Recommendation?	Invasion to uphold authority of UN and International Law

Package: International Law interpreted from an Antiwar perspective

Just as there were differences of opinion and emphasis from within the pro-war community as to how much regard ought to be paid to international law and over how much respect it deserved, so too we find the same degree of ambivalence among antiwar opinion when taken as a whole.

For those opponents of the invasion who incorporated international legal concerns into their arguments, one narrative stood out above all others: the war was illegal. That, they insisted, was and remains the opinion of most international lawyers and the UN Secretary General through subtly phrased admissions (BBC News 2004). Resolution 1441 said Iraq would face 'serious consequences' if they did not comply with the UN inspections process. Whereas the standard phrase for authorising the

use of force is that ‘all necessary means’ will be used if Iraq was declared to be ‘in material breach’ of the inspections process, which, as opponents of the war also pointed out, was a phrase that Hans Blix never once used in reports to the Security Council.

In response to pro-war interpretations of international law, this package concedes that although 17 UN resolutions had been passed against Iraq only one authorised force and that was in relation to a condition that had already been met, namely the ‘liberation’ of Kuwait 12 years previous. To resurrect a 12-year-old resolution on conditions that had already been met was itself an abuse of international law.

For proponents of this package these arguments are more than a technicality. They matter because governments cannot be allowed to operate outside of systems of international law picking and choosing laws when those laws suit government purposes, discarding them when they don’t. That is the way of dictatorships. Secondly, if every time a member of the Security Council had a dispute with another country, they could seize upon any one of the 1400 plus (now over 1800) UN Security Council resolutions, single-handedly declare the other country to be in material breach and use that as an excuse to grant itself the right to wage war, the UN would change from being an institution designed to establish peace in the world, to one granting a carte blanche right to Security Council members to go to war whenever they liked against whoever they liked.

Fig 4:

	Antiwar International Law
Problem definition?	War was illegal, according to both the letter and the spirit of the law
Causal interpretation?	(Package does not concern itself with causal matters)
Moral Evaluation?	US/UK Government's acting outside the law. Unacceptable precedents. (See morality)
Who is to blame?	(Package does not specifically concern itself with questions of blame)
Who has the solution?	The UN/International Law
Risks?	Launching war under these circumstances shows government operating outside the law, and the UN ceasing to be an institution for upholding peace
Treatment Recommendation?	At a minimum, no war without UN authorisation

Morality

Package: Pro-War moral arguments

Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime he led had an appalling human rights record, had murdered hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, ruled through fear, routinely practiced torture, launched a war against Iran in 1980 and (temporarily) annexed Kuwait in 1990. This much was beyond dispute and well documented in successive reports by organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The pro-war security package argued that in the light of all this 'regime change' through war was the only way to rid the world and above all the Iraqi people of this tyranny. These arguments were not just informed by a sense of moral outrage against the regime, but also by a utilitarian ethos. It was admitted that innocent people will inevitably be killed by invasion, but the number will ultimately be less than if we leave Saddam and the Ba'athists in power (Cohen 2003).

Advocates of the war also argued that whatever ones misgivings about the war, people should rally round and support the troops once military action commences. This too was seen by many supporters of the war as a moral imperative.

Package: Antiwar moral arguments:

Moral arguments against the war can be presented as falling into three categories: the consequential, arguments that revolved around concerns about the precedents military action in this case might set, and arguments from first principles.

Consequential moral arguments against the war revolve around opponents' predictions about the likely consequences of military action. The most commonly expressed of these was the prediction that the war will make the world a more dangerous place, by fuelling 'terrorism' across the world, conflict throughout Iraq and the wider region, or that the war would increase racism domestically. In many ways it could be argued that these arguments amount to a conscientious reworking of the antiwar security package, with the all important difference that rather than present security arguments in terms of self-interest and the dangers of 'terrorist' blowback for *us*, they cast the matter in terms of the war's likely consequences for the people of Iraq and the Middle East, and also for the future.

Many opponents of the war had particularly strong concerns about the doctrine of pre-emptive warfare that the Bush Administration advanced to justify an attack on Iraq when there was no basis to suppose that Iraq posed an immediate threat to the West. Antiwar voices, and even some of its supporters (see Hari 2003), regarded the doctrine as dubious, dangerous, and, they contended, without precedent in modern history. What would happen they asked, if the Iraq War were to legitimise the doctrine and thereby set a precedent for future pre-emptive wars?

This was the second category of moral objectives to the war. Clearly there are overlaps here with the antiwar international law package.

Arguments from first principles treat certain actions as being morally right and others as simply wrong without regard to their consequences or the precedents they set. Questions and debate about how this can be so, and whether matters of right and wrong must ultimately refer the consequences or precedents set by those actions are far beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, it is important to be aware, that in news reports, activists' own pamphlets and speeches, as well as personal interview testimony conducted by this author, opponents of the war often articulated any one of the following narratives as being intrinsically powerful arguments against the war on their own terms. There was a strong sense of opposition to killing people; opposition to war under any circumstances for pacifists, opposition to war under these circumstances for others; the war was seen as an unprovoked attack upon a sovereign state; as unnecessary; as a means of humiliation against Muslims; as imperialist; as having an ulterior motive, which for most people meant a desire to seize Iraq's oil; and as hollow and hypocritical given past Western support for Saddam and/or its continued support for Israel which was also in breach of a number of UN resolutions. Again many of these narratives can be joined with consequential and precedent orientated concerns, and from there to some of the other antiwar packages.

It is worth noting that none of the opponents of the war interviewed for this research ever built their arguments around open support for Saddam Hussein.

Opportunities

Package: Pro-War opportunities:

In many ways the pro-war opportunities package must be seen as an extension of the pro-war security package. Whereas the security package argued that force is necessary for the protection of Western societies and interests thereby safeguarding the status quo, the pro-war opportunities package goes further arguing that war would have hugely beneficial consequences. In its staunchly American version, the package makes the case that war would *extend* American primacy and power rather than simply consolidate it. Other advocates of the war saw it as advancing any one of a number of opportunities:

- War would pressurise Israel into accepting a peace deal with the Palestinians, since Israel would no longer be able to argue that Saddam's support for and funding of the PLO made any deal impossible (Fishburn 2002).

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- The removal of Saddam from power and the establishment of democracy in Iraq would set a contagious example throughout the Middle East (Ibid).
- More cynically still, others argued that the war would allow for a reduction in world oil prices. Rupert Murdoch even went so far as to predict \$20 for a barrel of oil. 'That's bigger than any tax cut in any country' he is reported to have said (quoted in Greenslade 2003).

Fig 5:

	Pro-war opportunity
Problem definition?	The problem presents an opportunity to extend American interests in the region
Causal interpretation?	Saddam's continued presence and defiance is seen as an obstacle to realisation of those interests
Moral Evaluation?	(Not necessarily concerned with morality)
Who is to blame?	Saddam
Who has the solution?	America
Risks?	Fulfilment of these objectives reduces risk/ makes the world safer
Treatment Recommendation?	Invasion for the sake of regime change

Package: Antwar opportunities

Curiously opponents of the war often argued precisely the same things: the war was about oil and extending American power. Far from being attractive options they were considered a nightmare scenario, especially the extension of American hegemony. Needless to say opponents of the war also regarded these objectives as morally bankrupt. Questions of problem definition, causal interpretation, and who and what is to blame can be fused together under the headings of US imperialism, oil dependency, and pro-Zionism as an all-encompassing answer to each point.

The frames applied: the different schools of thought

This, as I see things, is a rough outline of the main points of debate raised during the run-up to the war and carrying on through it ever since. Needless to say, the model represents a tidied up version of the different arguments since in reality they were usually more complex, detailed, and arguably in each case, contradictory than is presented here. But the fact remains that in the lead-up to the war when the issue stood at the top of the news agenda, few people could have entirely escaped exposure to these arguments. This means that each of these different packages would have been weighed up and interpreted by individuals and political parties. None of the main protagonists in the debate had the luxury of opting out of

addressing any of the four main areas of contestation. Nor could any of them have gotten away with having nothing to say in response to these concerns. Moreover for them it was not enough to have a potentially inconsistent ad hoc set of arguments; they needed to be woven together into a consistent and persuasive school of thought as they saw it. The result was the emergence of six main different schools of thought on the Iraq War – three in favour, three against, (not counting those who were undecided on the matter).

The three pro-war schools of thought are labelled ‘Neo-conservatism,’ the ‘official’ line, and ‘Liberal Hawks.’ The three antiwar schools are ‘Antiwar Realists,’ ‘Liberal Doves’ and ‘Antiwar Radicals.’

Neo-conservatism

Neo-conservatism can be distinguished from other pro-war voices by its enthusiasm for and faith in the virtues of American leadership and its apparently sincere belief that this works for the benefit of the whole world on the grounds that America is the only power on Earth able to create security in our world (Donnelly 2000). Reluctant to openly regard itself as an imperial project, as its critics chastise it for being, global security is guaranteed by the protection that only America can create by driving state tyranny and state sponsored terrorism from the world thereby paving the way for democracy. Thus for the neo-conservatives the war on terror is both a moral calling and an opportunity for advancing their vision. This necessitates a pro-active rather than simply reactive approach to warfare. Hence the doctrine of ‘pre-emptive action.’ It draws heavily on the pro-war versions of the security, opportunity and morality packages, but little, if any regard, is paid to the dictates of international law and the UN.

From the left, centre and even the centre-right, critics point to instances of hypocrisy and insincerity of this vision as not all tyranny and/or support for terrorism is so vigorously pursued; the dangerous implications of the pre-emption doctrine, and of abandoning any allegiance to any form of international law. In general these criticisms have tended to manifest themselves in the negative coverage that neo-conservatism has been met with in elite European newspapers (Tzogopoulos 2006).

The ‘official’ view

Referring to the ‘official’ view of the British government, this view admits no contradictions, shortcomings, or cynicism in the case for war. It was moral for ridding the Iraqi people of Saddam Hussein, legal because of Iraq’s putative non-cooperation with the UN weapons inspectors, and has made Britain and the world more secure by removing the threat a WMD armed Iraq was said to pose. These arguments are limited to making a case for the Iraq War and the wider war on

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terror. They are not connected to the broader vision for the world that *radically* departs from existing structures. In other words, this school of thought embraces the pro-war security, international law and morality packages, but, publicly at least, denies that the temptations of the more cynical aspects of the pro-war opportunities package even exist. For example, Tony Blair always dismissed the idea that the war was all about oil as nothing more than a ‘conspiracy theory’ (Guardian 2003a).

The Liberal Hawk view

The Liberal Hawk view was most famously articulated by a number of journalists and print media political commentators, hailing from the left to the centre ground politically (with, inevitably, different shades of emphasis between them). In the UK this meant people like Nick Cohen (of *The Observer* and *New Statesman*), David Aaronovitch (at *The Guardian* in 2003, now at *The Times*), Johann Hari (*The Independent*); stateside it meant commentators like Thomas Friedman (of *The New York Times*) and Christopher Hitchens. They saw military action in terms of being a war against Saddam Hussein not Iraq, justified on the basis of his appalling human rights record. Some were perhaps more sceptical than others about certain aspects of the official case for war, notably the claims about WMD in Iraq and the possibility of there being links between Ba’athist Iraq and Al-Qaeda, but in any case they rarely ever made those the central tenets of their arguments. In sum, the arguments in the pro-war morality package alone were sufficient to make the case for war (see Hari 2003). In a strange sort of way then, they may well have had more in common with the neo-conservatives than the official line.

Antiwar voices

The three antiwar schools of thought are best characterised as existing along a continuum from the Antiwar Realists, through the Liberal Doves, to the Antiwar Radicals, depending on how far they were exercised by the dictates of realpolitik at the Realist end through to how far they were exercised by supposedly principled and moral considerations at the Radical end. They still amount to different schools of thought because of the variations in emphasis that they give to the different antiwar frames.

Antiwar realists

Antiwar realists were not the most vocal of opponents to the war. They included people like former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and were generally on the centre-right. Their argument was that first and foremost the war was at best a huge and unnecessary risk, at worst a mistake that would be counterproductive as a means of combating terrorism and would undermine regional stability in the Middle East. In other words their arguments tended to be built around the premises of the ‘antiwar security’ package, although they did incorporate

arguments from the antiwar morality package regarding soldiers' lives being unnecessarily endangered.

They tend to be supportive of other aspects of the 'war on terror'. It just so happens that the Iraq War was regarded as a counter-productive move as part of the fight against terrorism.

Liberal Doves

This position is best exemplified by the Liberal Democrat Party's opposition to the Iraq War. They shared many of the 'antiwar realist' concerns about the war articulating many of the same arguments about its likely consequences for national and international security. The two most significant elements to their case that distinguishes them from the antiwar realists, are first, that they were more vocal in their opposition to the war, for instance partaking in marches against it before the start of military action, but not once it began; and second, is that they also rooted their arguments more strongly in the legal objections to the war, and concern about their implications for the UN.

Their stance on other aspects of the 'war on terror' is a qualified one. Most 'Liberal Doves' including the Liberal Democrats, supported the Afghanistan War for instance. But it has not been uncommon for them to raise objections against other aspects of the 'war on terror' such as extraordinary rendition and Guantanamo Bay.

Antiwar Radicals

The antiwar radicals were the mainstay of public opposition to the war, as represented by the Stop the War Coalition, and the majority of locally based antiwar groups from across the country. In many ways they stood for people's understanding of the term 'the antiwar movement'. While there was little in the central plank of 'antiwar realist' and 'liberal dove' positions that the mainstream of the movement would actually disagree with and indeed they too often articulated the antiwar legal and security packages, this was not where the emphasis of their arguments lay. For them the Iraq War was not simply a mistake, but was a fundamentally immoral and unprincipled. Their arguments were also strongly rooted in an anti-imperialist discourse that drew on elements of the antiwar opportunities package, which would have been unthinkable for the 'antiwar realists', and something that the 'liberal doves' were cautious about emphasising. It is also worth noting that the 'antiwar radicals' were much more sceptical about the existence of the WMD in Iraq than either of the other two antiwar positions. And that their arguments went beyond opposition to the Iraq War, to encompass objections to the entire 'war on terror', criticism of Israel's occupation of Palestine, and of America for being an imperialist power, as they would see things.

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Finally, some of the more radical elements within the movement were inclined to reject the validity of the antiwar security and international law packages, being mistrustful of the UN seeing it as a handmaiden of US imperialism (Ali 2003), and also wary of the self interested morality inherent in the antiwar security package. Instead they preferred to build their case near solely on the basis of the antiwar morality and opportunities packages.

These six schools of thought are significant not simply because they represent six different ways of looking at the issues involved in the controversy, but because as the main protagonists in the debate they were the ones who drove the arguments onwards vigorously promoting their packages as they attempted to persuade public opinion.

Undecided opinion

Lastly there is one more body of opinion which was surely significant, encompassing a large section of the public even if didn't amount to a school of thought as such – undecided opinion. In many ways this is something of an anomaly among the protagonists within the debate, because unlike all the other schools of thought which pushed their respective lines to some degree, agnostic opinion did not. It's not that as individuals they didn't hold any views on the matter or regarded it as unimportant, just that they saw the issues as finely balanced. Moreover their views did not coalesce around any single package of argumentation. No doubt many agnostics could be found on the Labour backbenches. John Kampfner's account of how the Labour party hierarchy right up to Tony Blair went about persuading reluctant Labour MPs to vote for the war in the days and hours leading up to the House of Commons vote on military action on 18 March 2003 is illuminating:

Some were told this was about saving the integrity of the UN. Some were given the full moral case against Saddam, emphasising his human rights record. Some had the specific line on WMD. Some were asked if they really wanted to reward the perfidy of the French. Some were reminded of the domestic political implications, that the government could be in peril. Some were told that their protest was futile. (Kampfner 2004: 306-307).

In some cases the whipping was successful, in some cases it wasn't. The point is that the agnostic uncertainties did not revolve around any single issue or area of concern. As a result opinion that fell into this category cannot be said to add up to any particular school of thought.

Framing and the media research agenda

The model outlined above, I believe, provides a refined template for thinking about and navigating our way through the arguments that raged over the Iraq War. Additionally, there are a number of important questions for media research relating to a) the media's treatment of the controversy surrounding the war, and b) the media's treatment of the antiwar movement, that the model allows us to explore.

First of all, the Iraq War was near unique among recent military operations involving British forces, in that it divided the national press with three national daily newspapers (the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, and the *Mirror*) and two of the Sunday papers (the *Independent on Sunday* and the *Sunday Mirror*) being opposed to the UK government's decision to go to war. This stands in sharp contrast to previous recent wars which the press unanimously supported.³ However, the packaging approach and the corresponding schools of thought outlined in this paper, allow us to break free from the one-dimensionality of the for-or-against way of looking at the controversy over the Iraq crisis so as to identify the schools of thought that individual newspapers articulated. By teasing out the underlying assumptions of the leader columns and the main columnists writing for each paper, and by identifying those aspects of the case for or against the war that they emphasise, it should be possible to place columnists and editorials according to the schema outlined in this paper. Research by Nick Couldry and John Downey (2004) offers some suggestive pointers. The leaders in the *Daily Telegraph* for example, were very much in favour of the decision to go to war whilst simultaneously arguing that the government had not made its case as effectively as it should have done. Instead of making a case for war on the basis of the threat Saddam Hussein was said to have posed, the *Telegraph* editorials argued that the British government would have been far more persuasive if it had made a more open case for 'regime change' to strengthen Anglo-American power in the Middle East and thereby ensure stability in that region of the world (Ibid.: 270-272). In short the *Telegraph* articulated the 'Neo-Conservative' argument for war. By contrast, the *Times* made a case for war that was almost entirely in line with the UK government's narrative, admitting neither contradiction nor cynicism in their pro-war arguments (Ibid.: 269-270). In other words, the *Times* voiced the 'Official' argument. It would be instructive to identify which packages (if any) the editorial columns from the remaining national papers articulated, and to see whether each publication did so consistently, because it is possible that some newspapers oscillated between two or more schools of thought. More importantly, one of the main tests of pluralism for the mainstream national media must be whether or not the full range of perspectives on the conflict were articulated through the national press when taken as a whole.

Second, for a newspaper to embrace a particular school of thought in its leader columns would be one thing, but in all the national papers, and the regional and

local press even more so, the Op-Ed pages only ever amount to a small section of the paper, with most of the rest of the editorial copy being taken up by news reporting. Without arguing that the purpose of news reporting is to champion any particular perspective, reports may still provide a voice for different viewpoints through the sources they quote. This is another aspect of the plurality test for the media. Yet the relationships between news sources and the news media are almost invariably fraught with tensions (Ericson et al 1989; Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). In this respect the case of the UK antiwar movement is very similar to that of any other social movement (or political party, pressure group or trade union for that matter) in that the locus of tensions between movements and the media reside in their different objectives. Movements want to use the media to promote their preferred framings, whereas the media simply want to tell stories (Gamson and Wolsfeld 1993). After surveying 525 war and antiwar related news reports, letters and leaders from a selection of local newspapers (the *Manchester Evening News*, the *Leicester Mercury*, the *Slough Express*, the *Slough Observer*, the *Enfield Gazette*, and the *Bury Free Press*) from 2003, it soon became apparent that among the news reports only a minority of 20 percent could even be said to articulate a package in relation to the crisis. Yet the research also found that the reports from a limited number of newsworthy events were more inclined to allow for the detailed presentation of the arguments surrounding the controversy. Moreover there was an identifiable association between the reporting of certain types of events and the packages they articulated. For instance, one such category of newsworthy event would be local public meetings. In the circulation areas of the selected newspapers these were invariably organised by the locally based antiwar groups, so if any school of thought was to emerge from the reports of these meetings it was always most likely to be either the Liberal Dove, or more commonly, the Antiwar Radical position. And so it proved to be. Ten of the 32 reports of public meetings yielded a detailed exposition of the Antiwar Radical case and a further two reports outlined the Liberal Dove school of thought. (The remaining two-thirds of reports were judged to be either too incoherent or insufficiently detailed to qualify as articulating any position). From the other side of the argument the 'official' case for war was commonly presented when the paper sampled the views of local MPs (including Tory MPs), or reported on the 'shuttle diplomacy' that senior British politicians, notably Tony Blair, were engaged in during the British government's attempts to secure a 'second UN resolution' to authorise force against Iraq. (The two evening papers, the *Manchester Evening News* and the *Leicester Mercury*, both had regular 'World News' sections carrying this type of report).

Concluding remarks

In this paper I hope to have outlined some of the main points of contention in the controversy over the Iraq War and the schools of thought they coalesced into. I also hope to have drawn attention to some suggestive lines of enquiry for media

research. In particular, questions have been asked about how closely the national newspapers attached themselves to the particular schools of thought, and whether there was an elective affinity between the focus of certain types of news report (in the local press) and their propensity to articulate the different positions on the controversy over the Iraq War.

Notes

¹I would like to thank David Deacon for his helpful and insightful comments on draft versions of this paper.

²There are other ways of designing framing research. See Tankard (2003).

³Summarising recent general tendencies in war reporting Murray et al (2008: 9) write that 'Existing studies suggest that, on the whole, the media have 'served the military rather well' during times of war'. Indeed one would have to go as far back as to the Suez crisis of 1956 to find a comparable lack of consensus among the British press about the decision to resort to military action. See Tulloch (2007).

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