Justifying War:
Security and Humanitarianism in the Case for Iraq

Babak Bahador, Jeremy Moses and Tessa Wright
University of Canterbury

Abstract

Before the 2003 Iraq war, the political leadership of the United States and United Kingdom had to sell the case for war to their people and the world. This was attempted through a number of key speeches that employed rhetorical justifications for the war. Two prominent justifications used during this period involved the employment of security and humanitarian narratives. The security narrative focused on claims regarding Iraq's undermining of international law, their possession of weapons of mass destruction and their threat to the world. The humanitarian narrative revolved around claims about human suffering in Iraq and the need to liberate its people. While it is widely assumed that security is the dominant *casus belli* in the post 9/11 world, there is much evidence to suggest that the humanitarian justifications that played a critical role in the military interventions of the 1990s were still important after 9/11. Based on an extensive content analysis of speeches by the US and UK political leadership during the year leading up to war, this research project will quantify the relative importance of each narrative and identify the main frames that were employed in their construction. It will then analyse what these results mean in the context of ongoing debates within the 'responsibility to protect (R2P)' movement over the extent of pre-war humanitarian justifications for the 2003 Iraq invasion.

Introduction

The decisions that were taken in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 have been subject to much scrutiny and debate. Even now, in 2010, a commission is under way in the UK that aims to clarify 'the way decisions were made and actions taken' by the UK Government in relation to Iraq over the years from 2001-2009. In giving evidence to this commission, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has maintained that the invasion of Iraq

was justified due to Iraq's flaunting of international law, its connections to al-Qaeda and for the liberation of the Iraqi people from Saddam's despotic rule.[1] What we have, therefore, are a set of justifications based around concerns over international security and the humanitarian situation in Iraq. The purpose of this paper is to examine how much weight was given to these broad narratives in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This task will be approached through a content analysis of all speeches made by the main foreign policy-makers in the US and UK in the six months leading up to the invasion.

Of particular interest to us are the inclusion (or absence) of humanitarian arguments by the primary political leaders in the US and UK. Debates over the prevalence of humanitarian justifications have ongoing significance for the attempt to promote the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) as an international legal norm that would allow for humanitarian interventions in states that are abusing their own populations. The key questions in this regard are: To what extent were humanitarian claims made by political leaders in the US and UK as justifications for invading Iraq in 2003? To what extent did these humanitarian arguments draw on the language and concepts that make up the R2P? If humanitarian arguments were used to justify the invasion, what does this tell us about the potential opportunities and dangers of further advancing R2P norms?

The persistence of debate within the pro-R2P community over the significance of the Iraq invasion for the R2P movement makes these questions particularly pertinent. It is possible to break responses to Iraq on the part of R2P advocates into three broad categories: First, those who claim that humanitarian arguments were only used after the invasion had taken place and no weapons of mass destruction had been found; second, those who argue that there were humanitarian claims made prior to the conflict but that these arguments were not made with any great consistency or conviction; and finally, those who argue that the humanitarian case for invading Iraq was made consistently before the conflict. It is worth considering each of these arguments in turn in order to gain a fuller understanding of what they are claiming and why they seek to portray the pre-war justifications in the way that they do.

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[1] For the terms of reference and proceedings of the Commission of Enquiry, see
http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/

The first of the three groups – those who claim that humanitarian arguments only appeared *ex post facto* – is perhaps the most interesting and important in relation to this study. The importance of this claim lies in the implicitly related argument that the invasion of Iraq should not be understood as reflecting negatively on the R2P itself, which was at best used as a cloak of convenience for an ill-conceived US foreign policy adventure and only after the 'real' justifications had fallen through. Interestingly, the claim that humanitarian concern only represented an *ex post facto* justification for the Iraq invasion appears repeatedly in the work of prominent R2P advocate Thomas Weiss (2004a: 234; 2005: 178-79; 2006: 749-50, 53). In a 2004 article on the prospects for the R2P in the context of the war on terror, Weiss (2004b: 144) claimed that "With no evidence uncovered to date, the pre-war justifications of the Iraqi threat (WMDs and links to Al-Qaeda) gave way to embellishing the rationale of freeing subjected Iraqi populations from Saddam Hussein's thuggery.' This claim was reiterated in his recent book, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*, where Weiss (2007: 124) again argues that the humanitarian justifications for invading Iraq were 'spurious and largely *ex post facto'* and that R2P language had only been 'retroactively applied.'   Other prominent advocates to have made similar claims include Ramesh Thakur (2004: 18, 23) and Richard Falk (2003: 12).

The question then arises as to why why such scholars feel it is necessary to make the argument that Iraq had nothing to do with the R2P or, more generally, humanitarian intervention. For Weiss, the *ex post facto* use of humanitarian rationales by Bush and Blair constitutes a 'contamination' of the principles laid out in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) report on the R2P (Weiss 2007: 124).   Other critics, such as Thakur (2004: 25-26) and Falk, concur with this argument and claim that Iraq could not and should not be understood as a genuine example of R2P principles at work, but rather, in Falk's words, an example of the 'imperial objectives' of the US government that are 'dangerous for world order and undermines international law and the UN' (Falk et al. 2003: 12). In short, the distancing of the R2P project from the pre-war justifications for invading Iraq is seen by many important and influential commentators and scholars as necessary to preserve the integrity and enhance the legitimacy of R2P norms. There appears to be a particular concern in the literature that any attempt to paint the 2003 Iraq invasion as having been (at least in part) inspired by humanitarian motives lends credence

to those who suggest that the R2P is the latest guise for Western imperialism and colonialism (See, for example, Kurth 2006: 99; Macfarlane et al. 2004: 983-84).

These concerns are shared by the second group: those who admit the presence of pre-war humanitarian arguments but suggest that they were not consistently or genuinely made. Here, in particular, the work of Kenneth Roth (Roth 2008), suggesting that Iraq was definitely not a humanitarian intervention, is a good example. Roth (2004) argues that the pre-war justifications were 'comparatively minor', that the war was 'not *mainly* about saving the Iraqi people from oppression' and that the humanitarian arguments only came to the fore 'after alternative justifications failed' (2008: 101, emphasis added). Likewise, Alex Bellamy (2005: 37) has accepted that humanitarian arguments were given 'considerable weight' by leaders prior to the 2003 invasion, but that this only came to the fore for the political reason of attempting to gain Security Council authorisation, not for genuinely held moral reasons (Bellamy 2004: 136). A third prominent advocate of the R2P, Gareth Evans (2004: 63), also admits the presence of pre-war humanitarian justifications, but argues that they were 'poorly and inconsistently' presented by the leaders. In his recent book on the R2P, Evans (2008: 69-70) proposes that for Tony Blair the liberation of the Iraqi people from 'the brutal and ugly Saddam regime… appears to have been his primary motive from the outset.' On the other hand, humanitarian justifications were not 'the explanation of choice for President Bush, who preferred to focus on the issue of weapons of mass destruction or Iraq's alleged connection with the al Qaeda terrorists responsible for September 11' (Evans 2008: 69-70).

As with the first group, the intention here is to suggest that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was not *really* an example of humanitarian intervention and that therefore no major lessons can be drawn from the Iraq example when it comes to promotion of the R2P. Whilst Alex Bellamy (2005: 172-74) has accepted that the use of humanitarian rhetoric to justify the invasion of Iraq has damaged the R2P norms as well as the credibility of the US and UK as 'norm carriers', the claim that such norms were only put forward in a piecemeal fashion prior to invasion and became more prominent only after the failure to find WMD or prove links to Al-Qaeda adds to a narrative that seeks to absolve the norms themselves from supplying any genuine justification for the decision to invade. In other words, if it can be shown that humanitarian arguments were consistently put forward by political leaders in

both the US and UK in the six months prior to the invasion of Iraq, it may be more difficult to dismiss the significance of the Iraq invasion for the R2P movement.

Before moving on to the content analysis, it is necessary to acknowledge that there were some proponents of the R2P who were content to see Iraq portrayed as a humanitarian intervention and who accept that humanitarian arguments were made prior to the invasion. Fernando Tesón (2005: 2), for example, argues that the war in Iraq 'was indeed justifiable as a humanitarian intervention' and, more importantly, that:

> In reading the materials on the war, one is struck by the fact that, whatever else was going on, the war against Iraq had an unmistakable *humanitarian component*. Liberating Iraq was always part of the motivation for the invasion. The public debate made clear that, other things being equal, the fact that the target of military action was such a notorious tyrant *was a reason in favor* of the war. Removing tyranny is not always a sufficient reason for war, but it certainly *inclines* us toward intervention. The removal of Hussein was central in the minds of political leaders throughout the whole exercise. It is true, as critics have pointed out, that Bush and Blair were slow in embracing the humanitarian rationale for the war. But they did so, before, during, and after the war (Tesón 2005: 10).

It would be fair to say that in standing by his convictions that Iraq was a legitimate example of humanitarian intervention, Tesón represents a tiny minority of the pro-interventionist community. Others, such as Michael Ignatieff, supported the war on humanitarian grounds (Ignatieff 2003) prior to the invasion, but have since recanted that support given the difficulties faced in democratising a politically fractured and traumatised populace (Ignatieff 2007).

It is precisely this variety of views amongst advocates of humanitarian intervention and the R2P that compels this research. In this context, a detailed analysis of the content of pre-war speeches by the major political figures in the US and Britain will either endorse or counter the claims of the various scholars, activists and commentators mentioned above. Were humanitarian arguments made prior to the invasion? If so, were they 'poorly and inconsistently' made as Gareth Evans claims, or was humanitarianism 'always part of the motivation for invasion', as suggested by Tesón? Were humanitarian arguments dwarfed by Iraq's claimed links to terrorists, or did they play a more significant part than that? Which leaders dwelt most upon humanitarian motives and which preferred the security rationales?

The content analysis that follows aims to shed light on these questions and provide a basis for further critical analysis of what the 2003 invasion of Iraq means for the R2P movement.

Methodology

Sample Selection and Unit of Analysis

This study analysed the justifications for war in Iraq presented in speeches by eight political leaders over the 6 month period prior to invasion. We selected six leaders from the United States and two of the United Kingdom that played significant roles in crafting the case for war. The leaders selected were President George Bush, National security advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Collin Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. We aimed to include all speeches delivered between the 1st October of 2002 and the 20th of March 2003, the day on which the command for invasion was given by President Bush, and the first bombs fell on Baghdad.

We undertook a systematic search of relevant archives located in the US Department of State, White House, Defence Department and UK Downing Street and Foreign and Commonwealth Office websites. All speeches, statements, remarks, and the opening statements of press briefings and press conferences that made any reference to either 'Iraq' or 'Saddam' were included. It was not required that the speeches provide a direct justification for the use of military force in Iraq. In total, 173 speeches were analysed.

The unit of analysis was each sentence that contributed to the case against Iraq, including those that referred to the objectives or principles of the US or UK and sentences contending that the use of force met various 'just war' criteria (defined below). In total, 4238 units of analysis met these criteria.

Content Analysis: Developing a Coding Scheme

We initially surveyed the speeches to identify the range of arguments present. A flexible coding scheme was then developed based on three levels of analysis: narrative, frame and sub-frame. The narrative level of analysis was broken into the categories 'security,' 'humanitarian,' 'mixed security and humanitarian', and 'just war only.' The security narrative concerns the concept that Iraq poses an international, national or regional threat,

while the humanitarian narrative relates to the suffering or oppression of people inflicted by Saddam's regime. The 'mixed' narrative applies to sentences in which both security and humanitarian arguments are present, or to broad arguments that could evoke either narrative.

The coding scheme had to be flexible to the level of detail present in different sentences. Broad sentences such as "Iraq is a threat to the world" contain a narrative, but no frame or sub-frame. Other sentences, such as "Iraq has weapons of mass destruction" contained a narrative and frame, but no sub-frame. In such cases, we applied the codes 'no frame' and 'no sub-frame' to indicate that only the narrative or narrative and frame level was present. Conversely, some sentences contained multiple frames and/or multiple sub-frames. Up to five frames and sub-frames were recorded for each sentence analysed.

Figure 1: Narrative, Frame and Sub-frame Code Summary[2]

- **Security**
    - No frame
    - WMD
        - Biological or chemical weapons
        - Nuclear weapons
        - Provision of WMD to terrorists
    - Terrorism
        - Support for terrorists or terrorism
    - Internationalism: Threat to international law and security structures
        - Iraq's disobedience of international security bodies
        - Iraq is a test for the future credibility of the U.N
    - Nature: Nature of Saddam or the Iraqi regime increases the security threat
        - Iraqi regime hostility to US/UK
        - Iraqi regime's history of aggression
        - Intrinsic characteristics of Saddam Hussein/ Iraqi regime
    - Regionalism: Threat to regional stability
        - Regional stability
        - Wider impact of regional stability

- **Humanitarian**
    - Human Rights: Saddam's brutality and Human Rights violations
        - Past national atrocities
        - Atrocities against neighbours
        - Current Human Rights violations

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[2] A detailed account of these categories is provided in the appendix

- Promise of Humanitarian relief and reconstruction
° Freedom
    - Need for democratization
    - Freedom of Iraq will lead to the spread of freedom in the region
    - Freedom will progress Iraq's economic development
    - Freedom in Iraq/Middle East will lead to our security

- **Mixed**
    ° Any of above

- **Just War**
    ° Last Resort: all other peaceful options have been attempted
    ° High chance of success: we will achieve our military and humanitarian goals
    ° Proportionality: minimal civilian casualties
    ° Right Intentions: we aim not to dominate or benefit economically from invasion, but to bring democracy/attain security.
    ° Right Authority: military action is authorised by an appropriate authority/ is justifiable under international law

Inter-coder Reliability

We developed clear coding norms through a process of inter-coder pretesting, carried out by two students. Inter-coder tests were performed for the narrative and first frame present in each sentence Ten percent of the speech sample was tested. Krippendorff's Alpha test revealed sufficient inter-coder reliabilities of .828 for narrative and .834 for the first frame of each unit of analysis.

Results

Narrative Frequencies

Our analysis showed that humanitarian justifications for war in Iraq were substantially present in the arguments of key US and UK leaders presented over the 6 months prior to invasion. At the narrative level, 78.2 percent of the justifications fitted within the security narrative, 11.9 percent were humanitarian, 4.8 percent were mixed and 5.1 percent were just war only. Combined, humanitarian and mixed narratives comprised 16.7 percent of all narratives.

Table 1: Narrative Frequencies

NARRATIVE	Frequency	%
Security	3315	78.2%
Humanitarian	503	11.9%
Mixed	203	4.8%
Just War	217	5.1%
TOTAL	4238	100%

Narrative over time

There was no significant trend in the prevalence of humanitarian narrative justifications over the time assessed. For the first three months examined, the proportion of sentences coded as humanitarian narrative rose slightly from 11.3 percent in October to 13.5 percent in December. In January the proportion of humanitarian narratives dropped to 5.9 percent, but rose again to 13.8 percent in February and 12.9 percent in March. The proportion of sentences coded as security narrative was similarly consistent, ranging between 72.2 percent and 78.2 percent over the 6 month period, with the exception of January in which security rose to 86 percent.

Table 2: Narrative Over Time

	S	H	S/H	JW
October	72.2%	11.5%	7.5%	8.8%
November	75.9%	12.0%	3.2%	8.8%
December	75.2%	13.5%	6.3%	5.0%
January	86.8%	5.9%	2.4%	5.0%
February	77.8%	13.8%	5.1%	3.3%
March	78.2%	12.9%	4.6%	4.4%

	S	H	S/H	JW
October	377	60	39	46
November	284	45	12	33
December	300	54	25	20
January	590	40	16	34
February	1120	198	73	48
March	644	106	38	36

Narrative by Leader

Of the eight leaders, Powell used the highest ratio of security narratives to humanitarian narratives: 92.7 percent to 2.1 percent. Cheney followed next with 88.4 percent security narratives and 4.7 percent humanitarian. Rice's speeches were comprised of 83.3 percent security narratives and 8.3 percent humanitarian narratives, while Blair focused slightly less on security (78.5 percent to 10.6 percent). Straw used 74.6 percent security narratives, and

15.2 percent humanitarian. The remaining four leaders gave less weight to security narratives, and used humanitarian narratives more frequently. Rumsfeld used 72.6 percent security narratives to 13.2 percent humanitarian, and Bush 72.5 percent to 14.7 percent. Of all leaders, Wolfowitz drew most frequently on humanitarian narratives (21.4 percent), and least frequently on security narratives (67.9 percent).

Rumsfeld used the highest proportion of 'Just War Only narratives' (9.1 percent), while Rice and Cheney used none. Blair apportioned 7.1 percent to 'Just War only' narratives, Bush and Wolfowitz 6.5 percent, Straw 4.5 percent, while Powell used only 2.3 percent.

Table 3: Narrative by Leader

Security		Humanitarian			Security		Humanitarian	
Powell	92.7%	Wolfowitz	21.4%		Powell	954	Wolfowitz	108
Cheney	88.4%	Straw	15.2%		Cheney	76	Straw	134
Rice	83.3%	Bush	14.7%		Rice	10	Bush	166
Blair	78.5%	Rumsfeld	13.2%		Blair	311	Rumsfeld	26
Straw	74.6%	Blair	10.6%		Straw	658	Blair	42
Rumsfeld	72.6%	Rice	8.3%		Rumsfeld	143	Rice	1
Bush	72.5%	Cheney	4.7%		Bush	820	Cheney	4
Wolfowitz	67.9%	Powell	2.1%		Wolfowitz	343	Powell	22

The ratio of humanitarian narrative to security narrative arguments used by different leaders ranged from 2.1 percent humanitarian, 92.7 percent security (Powell), to 21.4 percent humanitarian and 67.9 percent security (Wolfowitz). Bush and Straw also used relatively high proportions of humanitarian narrative arguments at 14.7 and 15.2 percent respectively. In combination, the two UK leaders used a slightly higher proportion of humanitarian narratives (13.8 percent) than US leaders (11 percent). A more marked difference was apparent between the US Secretary of State (Powell) and the leadership of the Department of Defense (Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz). Humanitarian narratives made up 19.1 percent of Defense Department speeches, but only 2.1 percent of State Department speeches.

Frame Frequencies

At the frame level of analysis, the most frequent justification given was that Iraq was a threat to international law and security structures, comprising 40.4 percent of all frames used. Also prominent was WMD at 29.7 percent. Less frequently used frames were regime nature at 11 percent, terrorism at 5 percent and the threat to regional stability at 0.9 percent. Of the humanitarian frames, human rights justifications proved more recurrent at 9.3 percent than freedom at 3.8 percent.

Table 4: Frame Frequency

Frame	Frequency	%
WMD	1422	29.7%
Terrorism	241	5.0%
Internationalism	1932	40.4%
Nature	526	11.0%
Regionalism	43	0.9%
Human Rights	443	9.3%
Freedom	180	3.8%
TOTAL	4787	100.0%

Frame over Time

Over the 6 month period studied, the frequency of internationalist (F3) arguments was lowest in October at 24.8 percent, but rose suddenly to 47.1 percent in November. From December to March the frequency of Internationalist justifications varied between 34.7 percent and 46.5 percent. WMD arguments peaked in January at 34.7 percent, otherwise fluctuating between 27 and 30.2 percent. The prevalence of regional justifications varied little, ranging between 0.4 and 1.7 percent. Terrorism arguments were most frequently used in October (11.3 percent) and February (6.9 percent), while the other months ranged between 1.3 and 3.9 percent. Of the humanitarian frames, human rights dropped to 3.8 percent in January, but otherwise varied between 9.1 and 13.1 percent. Freedom justifications were used most frequently in October, February and March (4.7, 4.8 and 4.1 percent respectively) and less often in the intervening months (1.3, 3.4 and 2 percent).

Table 5: Frame Over Time

	WMD	Terror	Int.	Nature	Region	HR	Freedom
October	30.6%	11.3%	24.8%	18.7%	1.7%	11.7%	4.7%

November	11.4%	1.3%	47.1%	12.0%	0.5%	10.9%	1.3%
December	40.8%	3.9%	34.7%	14.4%	1.5%	13.1%	3.4%
January	43.5%	3.4%	44.4%	10.5%	1.2%	3.8%	2.0%
February	32.2%	6.9%	40.0%	7.7%	0.7%	9.7%	4.8%
March	23.0%	1.4%	46.5%	10.8%	0.4%	9.1%	4.1%

	WMD	Terror	Int.	Nature	Region	HR	Freedom	Total
October	143	60	131	99	9	62	25	529
November	106	5	185	47	2	43	5	393
December	134	18	161	67	7	61	16	464
January	282	28	361	85	10	31	16	813
February	500	115	662	128	11	161	80	1657
March	257	13	432	100	4	85	38	929

Frame by Leader

Across the eight leaders, Powell used the highest proportion of WMD arguments at 35.6 percent. Cheney, Rice, and Bush also used WMD arguments frequently (30.5, 31.3 and 29.8 percent respectively). The UK leaders referred less often to WMD (Straw 24.7 and Blair 27.6). Blair however, was the most frequent advocate of Internationalist justifications at 51.9 percent. Straw also frequently referred to internationalist arguments (49.4 percent), as did Powell (47.2 percent). Wolfowitz used the lowest proportion of internationalist justifications at 26.2 percent.

Cheney was the most frequent advocate of terrorism justifications (11.4 percent), followed by Wolfowitz (8 percent), Bush (7.2 percent), Powell (6.4 percent), and Rumsfeld (3.6 percent). Straw drew on terrorist links less frequently (0.6 percent) as did Blair (1 percent), while Rice never mentioned terrorism. Bush used the highest proportion of arguments concerning the nature of Saddam/Iraq (16.4 percent), while Powell used the lowest proportion at 6.8 percent.

Of the humanitarian frames, Wolfowitz drew most frequently on freedom arguments (10.3 percent), followed by Bush (7.8 percent) and Rice (6.3 percent). Other leaders used freedom justifications fairly infrequently: Cheney (1.9 percent), Straw (1.7 percent), Blair (0.7 percent), and Rumsfeld and Powell (both 0.5 percent). Rumsfeld used the highest proportion of human rights justifications (14.4 percent), followed by Straw (14.4 percent), and Wolfowitz (12.3 percent). Cheney used human rights justifications slightly less often (9.5 percent), followed by Bush (9 percent), Blair (8.6 percent) and Rice (6.3 percent). Powell

referred to human rights least frequently at 3.1 percent.

Table 6: Frame by Leader

	WMD	Terror.	Int.	Nature	Region	HR	Freedom
Bush	29.8%	7.2%	28.7%	16.4%	1.2%	9.0%	7.8%
Rice	31.3%	0.0%	37.5%	12.5%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%
Powell	35.6%	6.4%	47.2%	6.8%	0.4%	3.1%	0.5%
Cheney	30.5%	11.4%	32.4%	12.4%	1.9%	9.5%	1.9%
Rumsfeld	27.7%	3.6%	40.0%	12.3%	1.4%	14.5%	0.5%
Wolfowitz	28.1%	8.0%	26.2%	13.5%	1.6%	12.3%	10.3%
Blair	27.6%	1.0%	51.9%	9.8%	0.5%	8.6%	0.7%
Straw	24.7%	0.6%	49.4%	8.5%	0.7%	14.4%	1.7%

	WMD	Terror.	Int	Nature	Region	HR	Freedom	Total
Bush	352	13	85	339	14	106	92	1182
Rice	5	0	0	6	1	1	1	16
Powell	440	0	79	584	5	38	6	1236
Cheney	32	0	12	34	2	10	2	105
Rumsfeld	61	4	8	88	3	32	1	220
Wolfowitz	158	7	45	147	9	69	58	562
Blair	116	0	4	218	2	36	3	420
Straw	258	1	6	516	7	151	18	1045

The UK leaders used a significantly higher proportion of Internationalist arguments than US leaders (50.1 percent compared to 36.1 percent), while US leaders used a higher proportion of WMD and terrorism arguments (31.6 to 25.5 percent and 6.9 to 0.7 percent respectively). The US Secretary of State presented a higher proportion of Internationalist and WMD arguments (47.2 and 35.6 percent) than the leaders of the Department of Defense (30.1 and 28 percent). The Defense Department leaders referred to regime nature more frequently than the Secretary of State; 13.2 percent in comparison to 6.8 percent. There was little variance in the prevalence of regional or regime nature arguments between the UK and US leaders. Of the humanitarian frames, UK leaders used a significantly higher proportion of human rights arguments (12.8 percent) than freedom arguments (1.4 percent). The difference was less marked for US leaders: human rights arguments made up 7.7 percent and freedom 4.8 percent.

Analysis: Security and Humanitarianism in the Case for Iraq

The results presented above then lead us back to the questions raised in the introduction and particularly to an analysis of the various opinions held by advocates of the R2P and humanitarian intervention. Before examining the significance of these results from the humanitarian perspective, however, it is worthwhile noting the predominant reliance upon security arguments by US and UK leaders, as the figures clearly indicate – not unexpectedly – that domestic and international security narratives formed the primary justifications for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The Security Narrative

What is perhaps most interesting about the security narrative is the fact that appeals to the defence of the existing international legal order – that is, the portrayal of Iraq as a 'threat to international law and security structures' – were the most common frames within the security argument in all but the first month analysed. This runs counter to the common belief that WMD and terrorism were the primary frames chosen by US and UK leaders to justify the 2003 invasion. What this suggests is that the US and UK leaders were keen to portray Iraq as a threat to the existing international order (and particularly the collective security mechanisms of the UN) *as a whole* rather than just being a rule-breaking state that presented only a minor (or regional) irritation. This emphasis may have been due to the need to gather more international support for the invasion, which demanded that the threat be presented in far more dramatic and 'global' terms than may otherwise have been the case. While this element of the results is not the main focus of this paper, it indicates that the common perception of the pre-invasion justifications do not necessarily align with what was being said by US and UK leaders at the time.

Also notable in relation to the security narrative and frames is the identity and ideology of those who most adhered to these justifications. Colin Powell, the most identifiably 'Realist' thinker in the Bush administration, relied almost exclusively on claims about regional and international security as rationales for invading Iraq. In this regard he is followed by Dick Cheney and Condoleezza Rice and then by Tony Blair and Jack Straw. This

point is interesting when we consider the fact that Paul Wolfowitz, George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld sit at the opposite end of the spectrum, having used security narratives the least and humanitarian narratives the most out of the eight leaders. What seems to emerge is a clear divide between Realists as advocates for the national security of the US and neo-conservatives as advocates of freedom, human rights and democracy in Iraq. In the midst of this divide sit the liberal internationalists of the UK administration, largely concerned with the international rules of the game and drawing on both security and humanitarian rationales for invasion throughout the 6 month period. We will return to this issue below in considering the extent and consistency of the humanitarian case for Iraq and the implications of this for the R2P or pro-humanitarian intervention movement.

The Humanitarian Narrative

The first observation that must be made when considering the data presented above is that the humanitarian narrative was consistently invoked by leaders of the US and UK over the entire 6 month period prior to invasion. If we add a proportion of the mixed narrative we can see that there was some substance to the humanitarian narrative – it wasn't thinly or fleetingly made. In addition, the persistent evocation of principles of just war theory also connects with the humanitarian case in that the R2P draws heavily upon just war principles in order to provide principles and thresholds for legitimate interventions. This finding has the most significance in relation to the claims made by Weiss and Thakur – amongst others (See, for example, Falk et al. 2003; Kramer et al. 2005) – that the humanitarian justification for the Iraq invasion only appeared *ex post facto*. On the contrary, it is clear that humanitarianism was a significant element of the pre-invasion narrative put forward by all leaders, with the notable exception of Colin Powell.

In relation to those scholars and activists who accepted the existence of the pre-war humanitarian narrative it would be fair to accept Roth's argument that the humanitarian element was 'comparatively minor' but less so Evans' claim that the humanitarian case was 'poorly and inconsistently' made. In fact, many of Evans' speculative remarks about the humanitarian rationale for Iraq can be shown to be wide of the mark. For example, his claim that humanitarian justifications were not 'the explanation of choice for President Bush, who preferred to focus on the issue of weapons of mass destruction *or Iraq's alleged connection with the al Qaeda terrorists responsible for September 11*' (Evans 2008: 69-70,

emphasis added) is not entirely accurate. While it is certainly the case that references to WMD outnumber references to humanitarian narratives, our figures show that humanitarian arguments were not only more numerous than references to Iraq's links to terrorism in the speeches of George Bush, but that this was the case for every leader analysed, with the exception only of Powell (who rarely referred to human rights in Iraq) and Cheney (who mentioned human rights marginally less than links to terrorism). If, therefore, Saddam's links to terrorism are considered to have composed a significant element of the pre-invasion rhetoric, then we must accept that humanitarianism was at least as significant (and generally more so) as the terrorist argument. Furthermore, Evans's suggestion that liberation of the Iraqi people was Tony Blair's 'primary motive from the outset' is not supported by the data analysed. In fact, George Bush was far more reliant on the 'freedom' sub-frame than Blair, as were Wolfowitz, Cheney, Rice, and Straw.

This brings us to the final point of interest: recognising who most used the humanitarian narrative and understanding why this might be the case. Given Blair's long-standing commitment to liberal internationalist principles, it is not terribly surprising that Gareth Evans would assume that humanitarian motives would be his primary focus in the lead up to the 2003 invasion. Yet the data indicates that Paul Wolfowitz, noted neo-conservative and Deputy-Secretary of the Defense Department, was in fact the most vocal proponent of the humanitarian narrative in the lead-up to war, followed by Jack Straw, George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld. As mentioned earlier, this contrasts with the very low percentage of humanitarian arguments put forward by Colin Powell. The significance of this finding can perhaps best be related to the ideological split within the Bush administration between the neo-conservatives, such as Wolfowitz and to a lesser extent Rumsfeld, and the realists, represented primarily by Colin Powell. What we see, therefore, is the extent to which neo-conservative policy makers adopted what are normally considered liberal internationalist arguments about the liberation of people living under tyranny and the democratisation of the world.

In addition, we can see how the interventionist arguments of a liberal like Tesón became almost indistinguishable from the 'humanitarian imperialism' (Nardin 2005) of the neo-conservatives in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion. This finding can be read as supportive of the arguments of scholars such as Tony Smith (2007) and Michael Desch (2001), both of whom have written on the use of humanitarian rhetoric to justify US-led wars. It is

important to note, however, that while the neo-cons and liberal internationalists express a common desire to liberate the oppressed through the promotion of democracy and human rights, there is a clear tendency evident in the data for liberal internationalists to dwell more on issues of international law and right authority, both of which are of more marginal significance for the neo-cons. What we see in the analysis of the speeches, in other words are the commonalities of the liberal and neo-con justifications for war as well as the points of divergence, with the issue of multilateralism and unilateralism foremost among them.

Implications for the R2P

What, then, can this analysis tell us about the R2P movement in the context of the 2003 invasion of Iraq? As the introductory section of this paper indicates, the differences of opinion between people who were all part of the ICISS process (such as Ramesh Thakur, Thomas Weiss, Gareth Evans and Michael Ignatieff) shows how difficult it is to decide when intervention is warranted on humanitarian grounds. There has been a notable tendency amongst this group toward distancing the R2P project from the pre-war justification of the invasion of Iraq, yet this argument does not stand up convincingly in the light of the content analysis described above. Does the conclusion that the humanitarian narrative prior to invasion was consistent and significant hold any lessons for these R2P proponents?

The first point that can be made in response to such a question is that it is not sufficient or satisfactory to simply write off the humanitarian rhetoric as being *ex post facto.* R2P advocates should confront the Iraq example head-on and learn from the way in which powerful actors are able to harness moral ideals in support of their actions. This should go hand in hand with the recognition that the power to decide when intervention should or should not take place ultimately falls to the most powerful states: How could even precise thresholds or exacting moral standards constrain this? Scholars such as Alex Bellamy (2004) have attempted to come to grips with some of these questions, but the tendency to return to international law (whether positivist or natural) as the cure ignores the fact that it was precisely the weakness of international law that permitted the invasion in the first place. Indeed, a closer examination of how the US and UK used humanitarian and just war arguments to *evade* international legal restraints in the context of Iraq would be a useful addition to the R2P literature. In this sense, the durability of the humanitarian narrative must also be noted. Even after the security narratives had fallen apart in the wake of the invasion and the

absence of WMD or any compelling links to terrorist organisations, the humanitarian narrative lived on and appeared to become more prominent. Again, this illustrates the flexibility of the humanitarian moralisation of war and the dangers in attempting to create norms that allow intervention based on humanitarian or 'just war' principles.

The second problematic tendency in the R2P literature is the suggestion that the use of humanitarian narratives by US and UK leaders can be written off as being a 'false' use of humanitarian rhetoric. In response to this claim it can be argued that for those of a normative bent, as proponents of the R2P tend to be, words *do* matter. What the leaders of major political powers say about humanitarian wars is going to have a major impact on how humanitarian interventions (and the R2P) are understood. Whether the political rhetoric matches the aspirations of the theorists behind the R2P or not, it is the words of the most powerful leaders that will shape normative outcomes more definitively than the words of activists or think tanks. Norm transformation does not only take place in the pages of academic journals, legal forums, or reports of high level commissions. Great powers, we might say, are 'norm entrepreneurs' *par excellence.* The R2P norm, to put it another way, is not above the political context that it seeks to transform. This is probably why promoters of the R2P have been so keen to distance their project from the Iraq war. Yet the reality that their principles have and will continue to be used by powerful voices in support of military actions that R2P advocates might not agree with remains a major and un-confronted issue. Once again, the R2P movement may benefit from facing these issues head-on, rather than simply trying to underplay the significance of Iraq for their project.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to provide some clarity in response to the question of how the Iraq war was justified by US and UK leaders. The analysis of speeches made by eight of the most prominent leaders in the US and UK in the six months leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq was designed to determine the relative quantity of references to security and humanitarian narratives. The principal finding is that while security narratives made up the bulk of statements in favour of invasion, there were consistent and significant references to humanitarian narratives and frames throughout the entire six month period. In relation to some of the post-2003 literature dealing with the significance of Iraq for the R2P movement, this helps to refute the claims made by some authors that the humanitarian case was only

made *ex post facto*. This was then followed by an analysis suggesting that those concerned with the promotion of the R2P need to take on the implications of Iraq in a more thoroughgoing fashion, rather than suggesting that the connections between their work and pre-war justifications for Iraq are either minimal or disingenuous.

This study still leaves a number of questions that could be subject to fruitful examination: What happened following the invasion? At what point did humanitarian narratives become more prominent than security narratives? How did different leaders employ just war narratives differently? In particular, who invested 'right authority' in the UNSC and who suggested that the 'coalition of the willing' constituted sufficient authority? Engaging with such questions can only help to further our understanding of how major powers incorporate moral principles into their foreign policy decisions, particularly on issues of war and peace.

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