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Blair's War on Terror: Selling Intervention to Middle England

Introduction

In December 2009 Tony Blair made an admission that quickly sparked outrage among government officials, television pundits and newspaper journalists. Asked whether plans for intervention would have altered had he known Saddam did not possess WMD, Blair (2009) asserted that he 'would still have thought it right to remove him'. Whilst this assertion is both interesting and controversial in light of the discursive work afforded to WMD in the run up to intervention in March 2003, it was predominantly Blair's qualifying statement that 'obviously you would have had to use and deploy different arguments, about the nature of the threat' which motivated the vitriolic backlash. Accusations ranged from Nick Clegg arguing that blatant attempts 'to pull the wool over people's eyes' were 'troubling and offensive', via accusations of insincerity and cynicism from Hans Blix and Richard Ottoway, to Ken Macdonald's (2009) assertion that Blair's 'alarming subterfuge' was fuelled by 'sycophancy' (Shipman 2009). For Macdonald (2009), Blair's revelation revealed the 'deceit' that enabled him to 'mislead and cajole the British people into a deadly war'. And yet Blair's '*revelation*' was hardly that.

Take, for instance, Macdonald's assertion that it is 'increasingly hard to believe even [Blair] found' the elimination of WMD a 'truly credible' justification for war. But why then would Blair have placed such a high degree of emphasis on this issue? The decision to emphasise WMD was an instrumental one. While it is, of course, at best extremely difficult to demonstrate the 'true beliefs' of foreign policy practitioners, it is perfectly sensible – and, in the case of British foreign policy under Blair, entirely necessary – to recognise that politicians act strategically. This instrumentality was perhaps best summarised by Peter Mandelson, who noted of Blair that 'he never panics. He thinks of two things. What is the right thing to do and what is the best way to communicate it?' (Cockerell 2007). It is naive to suspect that the issue of WMD and the way it was presented to the public were not arrived at by way of a detailed and strategic reading of the domestic political landscape. This would seem all the more likely given that Blair's language had consistently been framed for a specific target audience since coming to power.

To analyse Blair's strategic use of language in the 'War on Terror', this paper principally considers those elements of British foreign policy discourse that were distinct and divergent from coalition partners. Distinct and divergent themes were evident in all coalition states. Most obviously, in the United States, President Bush made frequent appeals to notions of 'frontier justice'. And, for example, Australian Prime Minister John Howard frequently invoked the distinct national (ANZAC) myth of reluctant but willing sacrifice in war to preserve shared values. Similar appeals to American Wild West imagery or Australian self-portrayals as a 'deputy sheriff' would have struggled to resonate in a British context. Distinct and divergent themes, while at times evident only as differing degrees of emphasis, were vital

to the political possibility of the ‘War on Terror’ and reflected a sophisticated ‘embedding’ of foreign policy discourse in the domestic political and cultural landscape. It is thus in these distinct themes that we find evidence of Blair’s strategically framed foreign policy discourse. This instrumentality poses important implications: for our understandings of foreign policy and political possibility; for understandings of the New Labour project; and for International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis.

To facilitate and situate this analysis, the paper begins by demonstrating why politicians almost inevitably frame foreign policy discourse for instrumental reasons before considering the peculiarities of Blair’s strategic framings from 1997 to 2001. It is argued that Blair’s foreign policy discourse before 9-11 already revealed the strategies that would inform his language after 9-11: he was actively attempting to sculpt a foreign policy discourse resonant with the foreign policy culture of ‘Middle England’. The third section considers the twin themes of rationality and leadership that dominated Blair’s language during the response to 9-11 and through to intervention in Afghanistan. In the fourth section, I argue that these themes were retained during the translation of the terror threat to Iraq, although, as we come full circle, they are increasingly channelled through a third theme of ‘international community’. This ‘doctrine’ traces back to 1999, particularly speeches in Chicago and South Africa, and one of Blair’s earlier wars in Kosovo. By 2003 its meaning had altered in ways revealing of the evolving focus of New Labour foreign policy under Blair.

Language: Elite cues and legitimacy

In Britain, the use of force is generally perceived to require public justification.¹ As Western has argued, ‘one of the most basic features of democratic politics is that military force is not used without some consideration of the will of the public’ (Western 2005, 107; Gelpi 2009). Two ideas and literatures are particularly important here: research on *elite cues*, and debates on the importance of *legitimacy* in foreign policy.

In the United States, recent debates on the selling of intervention to a domestic constituency have revolved around the role played by elite cues (e.g. Berinsky 2007; Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Gelpi 2009; Sullivan 2008). On the one hand, rationalist arguments posit that public support is determined by foreign policy events, which alter the cost-benefit calculations on troop deployment, supposedly performed by each and every citizen (see Berinsky 2007). On the other hand, as evidence of a rational and objective audience falls away, studies are increasingly demonstrating that elite discourse is vital to the selling of interventions (e.g. Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Gelpi 2009). Two important insights can be drawn from the direction of this debate. First, that public exposure to elite discourse is a more important determinant of support for intervention than knowledge of foreign policy events. And second, particular ‘cues’ and frames are especially important in determining support for intervention.

A prevalent topic of discussion within the elite cues literature is the public perception of military casualties. It has been argued that, far from a simple inverse relationship between battlefield deaths and popular support, the public are in fact far more sensitive to the framing

of foreign policy by practitioners and politicians (Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Gelpi 2009; Johns and Davies 2011). Whereas previous (rationalist) studies supposed that higher military casualties would lead to decreased war support, recent literature concerned with elite discourse has noted that support is more closely tied to the clarity of rationale for intervention and, if framed accordingly, military casualties can even increase support for war (contrast Mueller 1973 with Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Johns and Davies 2011; McCrisken 2010). These are important insights, which invite analysis of elite discourse and the use of particular frames to sell intervention. The impact of these framings can help to sell intervention in the short term, as well as serving longer-term political interests, through the generation of perceived legitimacy.

It is only necessary to consider instances where politicians fail to garner sufficient public support for foreign policy to understand the importance of perceived legitimacy. As Danjoux argues, 'a recalcitrant public will resist and can derail unpopular' foreign policy, while widespread opposition greatly 'constrains an actor's room for political manoeuvre in that and subsequent foreign and security policy decisions' (Danjoux 2008, 1). It is thus unsurprising that politicians seek legitimacy, defined as 'a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (Suchman 2005, 574 cited in Reus-Smit 2007, 3 and Hurd 2007, 30).

As Reus-Smit notes, legitimacy (when tied etymologically to 'legislate') involves a 'right to rule' through recognition that governance and policy are 'socially sanctioned' (2007, 3). Since 'the core principles of legitimacy express rudimentary social agreement about who is entitled to participate in international relations, and also about appropriate forms of their conduct' politicians seek legitimacy throughout office (Clarke 2007, 2). They are 'engaged in endless strategies of legitimation, in order to present certain actions as *legitimate*' and crucially 'at the point where legitimacy and legitimation overlap is a political terrain' (Clarke 2007, 2). The negotiation of this political (and cultural) terrain is central to successful strategies of legitimation. Indeed, politicians are rarely free to construct *any* foreign policy discourse. Clearly, it 'would be extremely unlikely and politically unsavvy for politicians to articulate foreign policy without any concern for the representations found within the wider public sphere as they attempt to present their policies as legitimate to their constituencies' (Hansen 2006, 7). The cultural contours of the domestic political landscape serve to facilitate, shape and constrain foreign policy.

This process cuts two ways. 'Although elites do not make decisions on the use of force by referendum, the literature has long recognized that elites are sensitive to public opinion on matters related to the use of force' and foreign policy more broadly (Western 2005, 107; Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009). And, crucially, as for example the elite cues literature has shown, public opinion is highly sensitive to the information and arguments put forward by foreign policy practitioners in government (Western 2005, 108; Zaller 1992). As prime minister, Blair was both sensitive to public opinion (inclusive of British cultural peculiarities) and acutely aware of his ability to persuade a given audience (Dyson 2007). Thus despite having 'the (legal) capacity to commit troops to intervention ... without majority support', Blair was aware that 'acquisition and maintenance of rule ultimately hinge[d] as much on

legitimacy as physical coercion, and such legitimacy [could] only be achieved through' carefully crafted foreign policy discourse (McDonald and Merefield 2010, 5; Krebs and Jackson 2007, 36; also Krebs and Lobasz 2009). It is not that legitimacy was fundamental (in a legal sense), but rather that it makes foreign policy easier; it is a lubricant that ensures a government can act efficiently abroad in pursuit of the perceived national interest. Ultimately, it is the process of strategic framing – of an actor 'attempting to guide political mobilisation toward a particular outcome and for a particular goal' – that is key to achieving perceived legitimacy which helps to make foreign policy possible (Barnett 1999, 15).

The 'War on Terror' – as a perceived and constructed new era – was especially vulnerable to the framings of foreign policy discourse. The era itself – the nature of the perceived 'new times' – was unusually reliant upon articulations of 'us', 'them' and 'our' relationship. 9-11 was an especially 'open moment' that cleared several of the more recent ghostly shadows from the palimpsest of international relations and coalition foreign policy in particular. It is little wonder that coalition states afforded 'framing' such significance. In the United States, 'the Bush administration was nearly as preoccupied with how the combat was portrayed as with the combat itself', while in Australia, Prime Minister Howard 'worked with key advisors ... to develop a clear and compelling message for intervention, poring over the wording of key speeches and statements' (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 35; McDonald and Merefield 2010, 3). The Blair Government shared in these efforts, recognising that the 'War on Terror' was particularly reliant upon its articulation. In Britain, like coalition partners, post 9-11 foreign policy was exceptionally scripted. Although most explicit and significant in the run up to intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, British foreign policy discourse was strategically framed throughout the 'War on Terror'. These framings, however, largely continued the discursive strategies Blair had established since coming to power.

Blair's foreign policy discourse from 1997 to 2001

Morality and rationality: strategically balancing an ethical foreign policy discourse

Famously, on coming to power in 1997, New Labour set about reversing 'the Tory trend towards not so splendid isolation' with Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (1997) arguing that in this 'age of internationalism ... we are ... obliged to accept moral responsibility for our response ... to human tragedy in distant lands'. In short, Cook aimed to 'make Britain once again a force for good in the world'. Initially, this 'ethical dimension' took the form of a focus on human rights as envisaged by Cook (Wickham-Jones 2000, 11-12). Early analyses of New Labour's foreign policy noted, however, that there were in fact two centres to the developing 'ethical approach' (Lawler 2000). The first, Cook's project, focussed upon rights, justice and British membership of an international community; it was more in keeping with 'old' Labour foreign policy. The second, Blair's project, employed a more modest and selective internationalist language, emphasising British leadership, US relations and enlightened patriotism; it was closer to 'traditional' UK foreign policy positions. As Dunne (2004) suggests, this may well reflect the fact that Cook's introduction of an ethical dimension came as a surprise to Blair. Eventually, as the 'ethical' label became a millstone around Cook's neck and Blair's engagement with foreign policy issues increased, the latter variant became dominant (Lawler 2000; Wickham-Jones 2000; Williams 2005). From taking power in 1997 through to the terrorist attacks in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania four

years later, Blair invested considerable discursive effort in selling this ‘ethicality’ to the British public and, in particular, to ‘Middle England’.

Although ‘Cook’s memorable phrase’ had undeniably ‘released a cosmopolitan genie from the official UK foreign policy bottle’, by 1999 where the language of human rights was present it was invariably accompanied by other less altruistic sentiments for highly strategic reasons (Williams 2005). In Chicago in April 1999, building on a speech he had made in Cape Town in January, Blair articulated the internationalist dimension of the ‘third way’ (Wickham-Jones 2000, 15; Blair 1999b).² The ‘doctrine of international community’ that he sketched outlined the moral argument for intervention:

‘The most pressing foreign policy problem we face is to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other people’s conflicts ... the principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects. Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter’ (Blair 1999a).

Sovereignty was rendered contingent, relying upon notions of rights and responsibilities. Discussing Kosovo, Blair presented external interventions as moral choices:

‘This is a just war based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand’ (Blair 1999a).

However and crucially, in order to ‘sell’ the normative argument for intervention, Blair employed three strategies to tie the issue to British interests. Firstly, he presented a synchronic argument, asserting the contagion of conflicts that would inevitably ‘unsettle neighbouring countries’ causing regional instability. The second and third were diachronic, looking forward and back. Blair combined them to great effect, selling moral intervention as a pre-emptive method to avoid greater losses, by drawing on the mutual reference point (and foundational British moment) of World War Two:

‘[A]ppeasement does not work. If we let an evil dictator range unchallenged, we will have to spill infinitely more blood and treasure to stop him later’ (Blair 1999a).

Blair’s attempts to ‘ground’ a moral foreign policy discourse within more ‘traditional’ references to the national interest through both geographical and historical warnings can and should be seen as attempts to frame his language for a specific target audience. As Blair himself later reflected:

‘[It was possible to argue that intervention in Kosovo] was an act of self-interest, in the sense that I think had we not intervened in Kosovo there would have been serious consequences for Europe as a whole. But I’m frank about it, that’s not what really motivated me during it ... To allow genocide to happen on our doorstep and do nothing about it would have been criminal on our part’ (Blair 2001 cited in Coughlin 2006, 104).

Emphasising the *rationality* of intervention – against the backdrop of an ‘ethical foreign policy’ – reflects a targeting of electorally vital ‘Middle England’. Blair recognised that ‘Middle England’ were deeply sceptical of extremes, favouring reasoned arguments that follow common sense, middle ground consensus and pragmatism. Thus despite being motivated by the ‘normative justification for intervention’, Blair stressed that intervention

was more than just the *right* thing to do; it was the *sensible* course of action (Wickham-Jones 2000, 15). As well as emphasising rationality in order to sell an interventionist foreign policy, Blair drew on a second principal enabling theme: British leadership in a globalised world.

British leadership in a globalised world: conviction rhetoric

Leadership, over community membership, distinguished Blair's variant of an ethical foreign policy from Cook's (Lawler 2000). Mirroring Labour's progression from a human rights to an intervention focus in foreign policy discourse, from 1997 to 1999, Blair became increasingly adept at *using* Cook's 'ethical dimension' to open up a space for the advocacy of British international conviction and *leadership*. By portraying politics as ethics, Charteris-Black argues that Blair was able to create political value through 'bold rhetorical contrasts between right and wrong' (2005, 148). Moral contrasts 'paved the way for conviction rhetoric', which emphasised that pursuing moral causes required conviction in conflict (Charteris-Black 2005, 148). Blair moved the 'ethical dimension' from 'good international citizenship' to the need for a 'moral crusade', with Britain setting the international agenda (Wheeler and Dunne 2002; Little 2000). He effectively wrested Cook's ethical dimension away from him, making 'ethical' foreign policy work towards enabling the (New Labour) foreign policy he favoured. Not only was this variant enabling in the sense of helping to make British leadership conceivable, it also helped to sell a moral foreign policy to 'Middle England' through appeals to romanticised images of a glorious imperial past, to which Britons could now return guilt free (Parmar 2006).

Underpinning Blair's foreign policy discourse – which emphasised morality, rationality and leadership – was a fourth principal dimension: a (particular) discourse of globalisation. Globalisation was New Labour's trump card and the concept from which the 'third way' was born (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 10).

'Today's Labour Party, New Labour, is the political embodiment of the changed world – the new challenges, the new economics and the new politics' (Blair 1996).

The primarily *economic* discourse of globalisation – in which globalisation is conceptualised as an external economic constraint – was extended through Blair's foreign policy discourse to demarcate the parameters of what was *politically* possible (Williams 2005, 27). In his 1999 Chicago speech, Blair stated that 'globalisation ... is also a ... *security* phenomenon' (1999a). Whether it was moral obligation after witnessing foreign events on television, the threat from unstable markets or population flows, Blair's globalisation discourse underpinned New Labour's *internationalist* and *interventionist* foreign policy. In expanding the New Labour discourse of globalisation to include the 'dark' side of globalisation, Blair set the tone for the discursive formulations that would later come to underpin his foreign policy in the 'War on Terror'. After 9-11, as in the previous four years, Blair's language was highly instrumental and framed to resonate with New Labour's key target audience: Middle England.

Framing: targeting the imagined foreign policy culture of Middle England

Arguably, the biggest change for Labour in their transition to *New Labour* was the approach to campaigning and communication (Claven 2000, 47). Language and phraseology were pre-tested as linguistic presentation increasingly dominated party strategy; emphasis shifted from grass roots campaigning to ‘influencing electoral opinion through the mass media’ (Claven 2000, 50). This was partially a response to changing British demography. Class realignments had favoured the Conservative Party and winning back these increasingly affluent and aspirational voters was central to New Labour strategy. ‘Labour since 1983 had sought increasingly to align its communications strategy to the Party’s aim of gaining sufficient support amongst key target groups in the British electorate’ (Claven 2000, 50). To this end, Blair conceded in 1996, at the peak of New Labour polling, that ‘there is no-one in the world more powerful today than a member of a focus group’ (cited in Claven 2000, 76). For those who saw New Labour as a ‘somewhat ridiculous marketing vehicle’, the 1997 campaign served to vindicate the extensive framing of policy discourse for target audiences (Gould 2000, 4). Indeed, the 2001 election was played out with a strategy largely continued from 1997 and achieved much the same result. Polling again permitted Labour ‘to use terminology and nuances that were very useful for developing [their] political message’; polling enabled an understanding of ‘how best to present ... policy in context’ (Denver and Hands 2000, 89).

Clearly, the framing of policy under New Labour was highly instrumental from the mid 1990s to 2001. Primarily, and most obviously and explicitly, it was targeted at ‘Middle England’. Indeed, as McNair (2003, 149 cited in Charteris-Black 2005, 143) summarises, ‘Tony Blair was elected largely because of his perceived ability to ... communicate ... to the electorally crucial voters of southern England’. So what and who is ‘Middle England’? Crucially, it is best understood as both a construction (or a perception) and a self-conceptualisation; it is a constructed category that was (and remains) in motion. Nonetheless, it was acted upon as an objective electoral category and helped to motivate strategic agency. Political practitioners, the media and marketers have ‘identified’ Middle England as the ‘heart’ of the UK. It represents an approximate midpoint of social and political values, a comfortable but aspirant economic position and is geographically clustered in southeast England, parts of the midlands and suburbia. ‘Politically, Middle England denotes a set of voters, presumed to have mainstream attitudes, who are also disproportionately likely to be swing voters in marginal constituencies ... They voted Tory until 1997’ and Labour until 2010, ‘though with misgivings in 2005’ (Reeves 2007). Reeves (2007) thus describes the ‘Middle England’ label as ‘convenient shorthand for the 25 per cent of the population who are not surgically wedded to one of the main parties – and who happen to live in marginal constituencies’. Weak party commitment and the tendency for ‘Middle England’ to possess views and votes ‘roughly representative of the nation’ made this group crucial to British electoral politics at the turn of the millennium.

‘[T]his semi-mythical land ... represents ... the very heartland of the nation. As such, it acts as a kind of political bull’s-eye: if parties can aim their policies directly at Middle England, the electoral match will be theirs’ (Reeves 2007).

And yet there is confusion – as well as perhaps conflation and tension – in the identification of ‘Middle England’. This can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, the key electoral segment in British politics has tended to be social class C2: semi-skilled manual workers.

The dominance of the Conservative party was founded upon an ability to appeal to this crucial core constituency. On the other hand, journalists have frequently written of ‘Middle Englanders’ as the financially secure residents of suburbia and English market towns. These people are referred to as either a source of mythical Englishness or the bastion of reactionary values. First, it is important to again stress that, while these two groups would appear to be distinct, ‘Middle England’ is not an objective ontological category: it is a construction, an interpretation and a self-perception, which is fluid and in motion. Second, to win the support of the British median voter, New Labour recognised that it was necessary to ‘overshoot’. Targeting semi-skilled manual workers was important, but it was less electorally effective than targeting the second imagining of ‘Middle England’: the affluent residents of suburbia and English market towns. In the political context of the late 1990s, for Labour to resonate with the latter would very likely ensure the votes of the former. If Thatcher had appealed to aspirational members of social class C2, winning the votes of suburban and market town England by default, Blair did exactly the opposite. Thus both ‘readings’ of ‘Middle England’ are important, but for Blair’s New Labour it was primarily the more affluent second imagining of Middle England for whom policy was strategically framed.

Socially then, an inclusive reading of ‘Middle England’ could comprise of the lower middle and skilled working classes, with some more affluent members of the middle class. Geographically, ‘Middle England means suburbs – in the south and the Midlands’.

‘There are moments when “Middle Britain” is preferred by Labour politicians, but Scotland and Wales do not feature in any of the social, spatial or psephological categories that command the attention of the political classes. Middle England is Metroland – the areas traversed by the Metropolitan Line: Pinner, Ruislip, Hillingdon – writ large across the English nation. It is Essex Man, or Worcester Woman, but never Merthyr Man or Galloway Girl’ (Reeves 2007).

It was precisely these areas, and the perceived ‘Middle Englanders’ who lived there, that swung from the Conservatives to Labour in 1997. It was these areas that New Labour was explicitly designed to appeal to and that Tony Blair’s foreign policy discourse would later target. Epitomising ‘an English middle-class masculinity which deplores “laddishness” and is centred on “reason” and intellectuality’, Blair achieved considerable success in targeting these voters (Johnson 2002, 226). As Johnson (2002, 213) astutely documented, in contrast to Bush’s more ‘populist, bellicose ... masculine, clipped’ and even ‘brutal’ language, Blair sculpted an ‘intellectual voice’ that appealed to a more ‘middle-class perspective.

Famously, foreign policy played a notably minor role in early New Labour electoral success. However, it would be misleading to suggest that British foreign policy under Blair was made possible only due to the stored political capital inherent in the majorities of emphatic election victories. Strategically framed foreign policy discourse was crucial to enabling British foreign policy throughout the ‘War on Terror’ and was increasingly central to the New Labour political project after coming to power. While electoral success was a useful platform for Blair’s foreign policy ambitions, as has been made clear, Blair was acutely aware of the need to craft a compelling foreign policy discourse in order to realise them.

British foreign policy discourse in the response to 9-11: selling intervention in Afghanistan

Blair's foreign policy discourse was carefully crafted to resonate with a key section of the population; he deliberately sculpted a foreign policy discourse that would mesh with the cultural make-up of his target audience, Middle England. From an underpinning discourse of globalisation, Blair articulated a natural leadership role for the UK, pursuing a moral and yet rational foreign policy. These themes, along with the political landscape that helped to inspire them, were central to the composition of the British context in which 9-11 would be witnessed, made sense of and responded to. It is relatively unsurprising that two key themes of the response to 9-11 were already well-established features of British foreign policy discourse. In contrast to Bush's appeals to 'freedom', Blair constructed 9-11 as an attack on democracy and civilisation. This constructed a 'self' that was superior, modern and secularised. Two key features of this British self were: first, a mode of self-consciously rational, logical and pragmatic reasoning; and second, a willingness to demonstrate British leadership in a global world conveyed through conviction rhetoric (Charteris-Black 2005). Naturalising both helped to make assertive interventionism conceivable whilst simultaneously appealing to the foreign policy culture of Middle England and silencing potential critics.

Rational response: threat to territorial sovereignty

As has been argued, Blair's New Labour came to power emphasising the need to make British foreign policy a 'force for good' in the world. Stressing rationality enabled Blair to do three things. Firstly, it enabled intervention to become conceivable by balancing the initially overt ethicality of New Labour foreign policy within a framework of third way reasoning. This meant that British foreign policy could be portrayed as 'not only' moral 'but also' rational (Fairclough 2000). Secondly, appeals to pragmatism and common sense positioned opponents as 'ideological' and/or naively 'idealistic'. Thirdly, rational reasoning was brought front and centre in British foreign policy discourse to maximise resonance with 'Middle England' through appeals to 'common sense'.

There were two strands to Blair's sculpting of a 'sensible' response to 9-11. First, Blair argued that British interests were directly engaged: the threat to the UK was clear and a response was in the British national interest. Second, he asserted that the government response was logical, reasoned and pragmatic.

In a CNN interview on September 16th, only five days after 9-11, Blair (2001, d) insisted the emerging coalition would 'not lash out' but rather would 'proceed with care' and 'consider the evidence'. He surmised that 'it is in our nature to be reasonable, to proceed very cautiously and carefully ... I think that we can proceed in a sensible way ... this is a time for cool heads, for calm nerves' (Blair 2001d). While crafting a careful, considered and sensible response, Blair (2001d) naturalised British participation in the coalition by stressing that 'our own interests are intimately engaged'. Thus while the 'appropriate military response ... will

be based on a hard-headed assessment of the evidence’, for Blair (2001a) it was self-evident that, for a number of reasons, Britain *had* to take action.

The crescendo of Blair’s rational foreign policy discourse was reached as war became imminent. In early October, Blair ramped up his attempts to portray a direct threat to British territorial sovereignty:

‘I also want to say very directly to the British people why this matters so much directly to Britain ... We know the al-Qaeda network threaten Europe, including Britain, and, indeed, any nation throughout the world that does not share their fanatical views. So we have a direct interest in acting in our own self defence to protect British lives’ (Blair 2001k).

‘We in Britain have the most direct interest in defeating such terror ... We know that if not stopped, the terrorists will do it again, this time possibly in Britain’ (Blair 2001m).

In making these arguments Blair directly appealed to third way logic in his foreign policy discourse. He presented an argument in which British foreign policy was not only moral *and* rational, but moreover that a mutually reinforcing position had been reached transcending such false dichotomies. Having directly opposed the narrow realpolitik of his predecessor, Blair had to work harder to sell a pragmatic argument. To this end, he explicitly and repeatedly used a ‘not only, but also’ discursive strategy to wed ‘realism’ and ‘moralism’.

‘[U]nless we take action, then we are all at risk, and so it is right for reasons of justice but it’s also right for reasons of self-protection’ (Blair 2001d).

‘So this military action we are undertaking is not for a just cause alone, though this cause is just. It is to protect our country, our people, our economy, our way of life. It is not a struggle remote from our everyday concerns. It touches them intimately’ (Blair 2001m).

Addressing an American audience, Blair (2002d) explained this ‘philosophy’ at length. He argued that the ‘only purpose of being in politics is to strive for the values and ideals we believe in’, but alongside values ‘we need a hard headed pragmatism - a realpolitik’ because ‘in reality, at a certain point these forces merge’. For Blair, this merging was evident in the coalition response to 9-11, which combined ‘defending territory’ with ‘defending what our nations believe in: freedom, democracy’.

As a skilled orator, Blair was able to adapt and tweak his language for different audiences. For instance, with ‘freedom’ unusually appearing before ‘democracy’, the previous quotation is clearly sculpted for an American audience. However, the key theme of rationality was particularly enabling in a British context. First, as well as helping to make intervention ‘thinkable’, Blair’s language served to make non-intervention unthinkable. By presenting his arguments as reasoned and almost legalistic, Blair acquiesced potential oppositional voices by making it very hard to argue against what was constructed and reified as the logical ‘common sense position’. In this, Blair’s style was reminiscent of Thatcherite arguments claiming that ‘there is no alternative’. Second, this particular and contingent framing of foreign policy as reasoned and proper struck at the heart of Middle England ensuring support

and perceived legitimacy as Blair appeared to speak for the people. Rationality in the British foreign policy discourse of the response was thus politically enabling in three analytical moments: it helped to enable policy to be conceivable, coercive (rendering alternatives inconceivable) and it enabled policy to be persuasively communicated to key target audiences. Emphasising rationality naturalised official articulations, presented alternatives as irrational and embedded foreign policy in the foreign policy culture of Middle England. To achieve these enabling functions, Blair's language was necessarily distinct and divergent from that of coalition partners. In contrast to Bush's appeals to theological understandings of evil amongst religious Americans, Blair directly targeted the household God of Middle England: Common Sense (Ash 2005, 28-29).

Globalisation and leadership: conviction rhetoric

Just as it was before 9-11, globalisation would continue to be both background and connecting force for New Labour policies at home and abroad after the fall of the Twin Towers (Fairclough 2000, 148-152). Addressing the Labour Party Conference after 9-11, Blair (2001j) confirmed that 'interdependence defines the new world we live in'. For Blair (2002d), accompanying the positive products of globalisation was the realisation that 'it is very rare today' for 'trouble in one part of the globe' to remain 'limited in its effect'. The result of this, he argued, was that 'today, more than ever, "their" problem becomes "our" problem' (Blair 2002d). Constructed accordingly, Blair was able to present 'the most obvious lesson' of 9-11 as proof of what he had already claimed: interdependence defined the modern world. In this intimately globalised world, there was simply 'no escape from facing ... and dealing with' problems such as people using 'scientific and technological advances' who 'have the capacity to destroy' (Blair 2002d). Arguing that the only 'alternative to globalisation is isolation', Blair (2001j) presented a case that engagement and even interventionism were inevitable: the decision was simply whether to lead or follow.

Leadership and conviction went hand-in-hand in British foreign policy discourse during the 'War on Terror' (Charteris-Black 2005; Fairclough 2000). Although the impact of conviction rhetoric would peak as intervention in Iraq loomed, Blair (2001i) was already stressing the importance of having a 'determination' to act 'without hesitation' in the immediate aftermath of 9-11. He emphasised British 'willingness, indeed our determination, to take the measures necessary' (Blair 2001b), insisting that Britons should 'not let these events shake our confidence in ourselves, in our country and in our way of life ... the most important thing is that we carry on with confidence' (Blair 2001f). For the benefit of both British and American audiences, Blair insisted that British 'determination in acting is total' (Blair 2001k); 'we were with you at the first. We will stay with you to the last' (Blair 2001j), 'we in Britain will play our full part, we will not walk away' (Blair 2001e). Indeed, for Blair (2001n), 'complete and total [British] commitment' was all the more obvious given the clear desire to avoid troop deployment:

'[O]ur very reluctance to use force means that when we do, we do so with complete determination that it shall prevail ... we will continue to act, with steadfast resolve, to see this struggle through to the end and to the victory that would mark the victory not of revenge but of justice over the evil of terrorism' (Blair 2001c).

Crucially, British conviction under Blair was not merely a matter of standing with the United States in their ‘time of need’; it was about unashamedly taking the lead on the global stage (Blair 2001i, 1). Blair insisted that Britain should shake off any lingering embarrassment over a colonial heritage and ‘take pride in leading’. Indeed, as he later admitted, Blair was proud of the British Empire (Parmar 2006). Although repeatedly praising Bush’s leadership after 9-11, Blair (2001g) nonetheless argued that ‘the mantle of leadership’ should be seized by Britain ‘at this difficult time for the international community’. This argument was central to both initial British participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and later ‘willingness to play a leading role in any UN mandated force to provide stability in Afghanistan’ (Blair 2001h).

Inevitably, the discursive force of Blair’s rational and resolute foreign policy discourse was multiplied when the two were brought together, as they often were. Blair (2001d, b, a) frequently referred to the need ‘for cool heads, for calm nerves, and for an absolute and fixed determination to see this thing through’; proceeding in a ‘considered’, ‘careful’, ‘measured’ way was inevitably linked to a nonetheless ‘total determination’ to act.

‘This is therefore the time for courage, for leadership, for taking the decisions necessary to achieve what any sensible sane person acting with reason and justice wants to see ... The cause is just, the strategy is there, the determination is there, and there is a complete and total commitment to making sure that this is a battle in which we will prevail. And we will; I have no doubt about that at all’ (Blair 2001n).

Having the conviction to lead in a dangerous globalised world performed the same enabling functions as rationality in British foreign policy discourse. Firstly, it made conceivable and naturalised an assertive interventionism, painting oppositional voices as preferring to render Britain irrelevant and subject to follow the lead of other, braver nations. And secondly, it meshed with the British cultural terrain, particularly the foreign policy culture of Middle England, by drawing upon popular and enduring beliefs in the importance of Britain in world affairs. Blair seemed to present an answer to those troubled by post-war decline and the struggle to find a role for the UK in the modern world; once again British leadership was necessary and something of which to be proud.

British foreign policy discourse and the translation of the terror threat: selling intervention in Iraq

While rationality and leadership remained central in British foreign policy discourse, the process of linking the terror threat to Iraq heightened the importance of a third key theme: the international community. From January 2002 to March 2003, rationality and resolve were increasingly channelled through an overarching narrative of international unity in an age of terror. As has been argued, Blair’s foreign policy discourse prior to 9-11 had begun from a particular variant of New Labour’s promise to establish an ‘ethical’ foreign policy, which gradually won out over alternatives and culminated in the so-called ‘doctrine of international community’ outlined in Chicago in 1999 (Fairclough 2000, 37-42). Against this background, it was unsurprising that Blair’s framing of post 9-11 unity demonstrated a far greater emphasis on its international dimension than Bush’s. This emphasis was amplified as Blair led efforts to secure a ‘UN route’ to intervention in Iraq.

Despite its ultimate failure, British foreign policy discourse was exceptional in the emphasis afforded to constructing a united international community. However, who this international community was remained unclear as unresolved tensions between two variants of 'us' featured heavily in Blair's language. Understanding this fundamental tension requires a consideration of the twin audiences Blair targeted as he sort to rally an envisioned international community abroad and persuade a sceptical domestic constituency at home. Despite this tension, Blair's channelled concurrent narratives of rationality and leadership through the doctrine of international community, aiding the construction of a politically enabling discourse that would ultimately help to render an interventionist foreign policy conceivable, coercive and communicable.

International community

On 7 April 2002, Blair addressed an American audience at the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, where he outlined the doctrine of international community as the internationalisation of the third way and a necessary response to globalisation. For Blair (2002d), it was 'vitally important that in a more unstable world with these inherent dangers in it, that you have America and Europe and Russia standing together'. In light of the dangerous new times that 9-11 heralded, Blair argued that differences 'pale into insignificance in my judgment in making sure that the really big common purposes we share are done together and the big challenges are met together'. Drawing a direct lineage from 'Chicago in 1999', Blair insisted that 'in today's interdependent world, we need an integrated approach, a doctrine of international community as I put it before, based on the values we believe in'. With typical third way logic, the doctrine was presented as not mere 'Panglossian idealism', but rather as 'enlightened self interest'.

By September 2002, Blair was portraying the doctrine of international community as the thread linking multilateral intervention in Kosovo before 9-11 and intervention in Afghanistan after 9-11. Such appeals to equate an international community with an international coalition were at odds with Blair's repeated references to mutual values: they took two different concepts of 'us' as their fundamental reference point (Fairclough 2005, 8; Dunne 2004, 894-895, 902-903). On the one hand, the international community was presented as a broad vision, encompassing those who are 'integrated ... sharing the same values, working to the same goals' (Blair 2002d). On the other, the international community was presented as synonymous with a narrow group of states capable of affecting change through military or economic intervention. For Fairclough (2000, 146-155), as in 1999, post 9-11 British foreign policy discourse was marked by a 'series of disjunctures between different communities referred to as 'we''. Such disjunctures were increasingly evident as the debate over intervention in Iraq progressed and were particularly well highlighted by Blair's ever-shifting conceptualisation of the relationship between the international community and the UN.

Two particular articulations of the relationship between the UN and the international community parallel the competing notions of 'us' in British foreign policy discourse during

the translation. The first articulation – that the UN and the international community are one and the same – reinforces an encompassing notion of international community.

‘Iraq has defied the United Nations – and therefore the whole international community – over the last eleven years’ (Blair 2002e).

In this conceptualisation, even Iraq could one day become a member (Blair 2002f). This was far from the case under the second implicit framing of international community, in which the UN was the forum or mechanism through which intervention conducted by the international community was granted moral legitimacy. In this conceptualisation, the UN existed ‘in order to express once again the firm determination of the international community to deal with’ problems such as Iraq (Blair 2002a). This divide represents a chronological shift in British foreign policy discourse during the translation as Blair became increasingly frustrated at the inability to secure a ‘UN route’ to intervention. This frustration was reflected in increasing warnings over the efficacy of both the UN and the international community:

‘That is why this is important because if the United Nations does not deal with this as a unified international community, then our ability to cope in a unified way with future crises about the same types of issues will be hugely diminished’ (Blair 2003d).

As the translation progressed these competing conceptualisation of ‘us’ came to the fore as the relationship between the UN and the international community reversed. What Blair had initially articulated as the potential for UN mandated intervention increasingly became an attempt to secure legitimacy through the UN for intervention on behalf of a more narrowly defined ‘international community’. With this strategic shift in response to circumstance and pragmatic needs came a shift in the values Blair prioritised in identifying the international community.

Throughout the translation Blair made reference to shared values and mutual agendas underpinning the international community in light of the dangerous new era. As in the response, Blair favoured a focus on democracy:

‘[W]e seek one integrated, international community, sharing the same values, working to the same goals ... We have so many shared values. We are strong democracies’ (Blair 2002d).

However, as the translation progressed, the ‘same values’ Blair alluded to in April 2002 were increasingly subsumed by a greater need for the international community to be defined by its willingness and ability to use force. Blair had warned that his support for the UN – defined as broadly synonymous with an encompassing definition of the international community – was conditional upon such a willingness in September and October 2002:

‘[T]he best way of dealing with this is with the fullest support of the international community. The United Nations makes sense for us to deal with it in that way, but only if it is the way of dealing with it, only if we can make sure that the international community as a whole is prepared to face up to the consequences of the continued breach of its own resolutions, the United Nations resolutions, and the insistence that Iraq comes into compliance’ (Blair 2002c).

‘[L]et’s go through the UN but this is a challenge for the international community to deal with this issue, Saddam Hussein has got to be disarmed of these weapons’ (Blair 2002b).

Over six months later, only two days before intervention commenced, Blair rued that:

‘Faced with it, the world should unite. The UN should be the focus, both of diplomacy and of action. That is what 1441 said. That was the deal. And I say to you to break it now, to will the ends but not the means that would do more damage in the long term to the UN than any other course’ (Blair 2003e).

By this stage, the ‘us’ of the international community was considerably narrower; defined as those who were prepared to put ‘fighting for our values right at the heart of the policies necessary to protect our nations’ (Blair 2002d). Throughout the translation, despite the shifting identification of ‘us’, Blair presented the defence of ‘our’ values with resolute conviction as both logical and imperative.

Channelling rationality and conviction to lead through the doctrine of international community

Continuing the pattern of the response, Blair presented the international community as the logical solution to the problem of Iraqi WMD, by drawing on the recurrent theme of rationality backed up with calls for responsibility. On the former, Blair argued that the steps the international community were taking were ‘reasoned’ and ‘reasonable’:³

‘I defy anyone on the basis of this evidence to say that is an unreasonable demand for the international community to make’ (Blair 2002f).

With repeated references to the actions of the international community ‘making sense’ and being ‘clear’, Blair presented an ‘entirely sensible’ solution:

‘I think that people will listen to an argument about this ... that is entirely sensible ... at the moment we are at the stage of saying let’s be clear, this is a problem for the international community and it has to be dealt with ... After all it is the United Nations resolutions that Saddam is in breach of. So it makes perfect sense to say that this is an issue for the international community and should be dealt with in that way’ (Blair 2002c).

To reinforce the argument that taking a stand was sensible, Blair (2002c) emphasised that inaction would be ‘irresponsible’. Logic and morality inevitably came together in Blair’s portrayal of an international community united in a determination to defend ‘the values we believe in’:

‘I am arguing that the values we believe in are worth fighting for; they are in the ascendant and we have a common interest in standing up for them. We shouldn’t be shy of giving our actions not just the force of self-interest but moral force’ (Blair 2002d).

Expressing a desire to ‘fight’ and ‘stand up for’ for ‘the values we believe in’ channelled a narrative of British conviction to lead through an evolving doctrine of international community, simultaneously reinforcing its appeal to a key domestic audience and pressurising the UN to act.

Throughout the translation, Blair (2003c) made it clear that the UN had ‘two paths before’ it. The first would maintain the authority of the UN and require a conviction to match words with action. The second would place such authority ‘on the line’ and diminish the future efficacy of the UN with regards to similar issues (Blair 2003b). Blair made it clear throughout that Britain occupied a strong position on the former path by constantly appealing to notions of British leadership in a new, dangerous and interdependent world. This complemented his appeals to UN Security Council members to commit to intervention in Iraq with direct attempts to resonate with the foreign policy culture of his domestic audience. Such appeals to British leadership were never starker than when addressing the British Foreign Office:

‘[W]e, Britain, need: confidence in ourselves ... This is not a time for British caution or even British reserve, still less for a retreat into isolation on the basis of some misguided view of patriotism. This is a time for us to be out in front; engaged; open; creative; willing to take bold decisions. All it needs is courage and confidence ... the British people, have plenty of both ... I saw it in Kosovo and Afghanistan ... Now is the moment to make our future as exciting in impact, if different in character, as our history’ (Blair 2003a).

Tying together British leadership and the need for the international community to demonstrate the conviction to act, Blair argued that:

‘I repeat my warning: unless we take a decisive stand now, as an international community, it is only a matter of time before these threats come together ... Show weakness now and no-one will ever believe us when we try to show strength in the future. All our history – especially British history – points to this lesson. No-one wants conflict’ (Blair 2003d).

The apogee of Blair’s conviction rhetoric, however, came at the moment of the most intense personal and discursive effort as he addressed parliament on the brink of war:

‘This is a tough choice. But it is also a stark one: to stand British troops down and turn back; or to hold firm to the course we have set. I believe we must hold firm. And if this House now demands that at this moment, faced with this threat from this regime, that British troops are pulled back, that we turn away at the point of reckoning, and that is what it means – what then? Tell our allies that at the very moment of action, at the very moment when they need our determination that Britain faltered. I will not be party to such a course. This is not the time to falter. This is the time for this House, not just this government or indeed this Prime Minister, but for this House to give a lead, to show that we will stand up for what we know to be right, to show that we will confront the tyrannies and dictatorships and terrorists who put our way of life at risk, to show at the moment of decision that we have the courage to do the right thing’ (Blair 2003e).

By this stage of the translation, Blair's concerns to appeal to an international audience had ended as he instead focussed solely on persuading both the British Parliament and a British domestic constituency. Despite clearly invoking 'this house', Blair continued to target Middle England and was rewarded with both parliamentary support and a majority of the British public in favour of intervention on the eve of war. It is unsurprising that conviction rhetoric surpassed a revised and reduced notion of 'international community' as the cornerstone of the case for intervention; the UN route to intervention had failed and thus intervention was reframed as the latest instance in a long British history of global leadership. This reframing represents the strategic agency of Blair as a foreign policy practitioner sculpting a foreign policy discourse that appealed to Middle England. Fiercely proud of the UK and continuing to harbour (arguably outdated) visions of British grandeur (and even superiority) on the international scene, offering to reinvigorate British glories by seizing the mantle of global leadership appealed to the perceived heart of the UK electorate. Embedding British foreign policy within a long tradition of global leadership and even as a repeat of the foundational moment of modern Britain – the successful defeat of Nazi Germany – ensured that foreign policy was framed to mesh with the cultural terrain of the domestic political landscape.

Conclusion

Several significant points should be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, the analysis presents important implications for our understandings of foreign policy and political possibility. While it is a function of democracy that Blair, first and foremost, sought to convince a domestic constituency, it is a function of the domestic political landscape that he targeted the (constructed, fluid and yet) specific, key target audience of Middle England. Blair could not have deployed *any* arguments. Rather, those he chose were carefully selected for political reasons. Crucially, the strategic framings of foreign policy discourse that Blair crafted were successful in that they were politically enabling in three analytical moments. First, Blair's language helped to render foreign policy conceivable. Presenting intervention as a logical choice and the latest instance in a long history of British global activism and leadership served to naturalise a contingent and contestable response to 9-11: it made such policy *thinkable*. Second, Blair's language helped to create a coercive foreign policy. Framing intervention as rational, reasoned and proper constrained and compelled potential oppositional voices. Those articulating such opinions risked being manoeuvred into the potentially debilitating position of being seen as 'irrational' or purely 'idealistic', lacking the pragmatism and common sense that Middle England are seen to demand from practitioners. Likewise, opposing the latest instance of British leadership ran the risk of being seen to consign Britain to a position of irrelevance. Stressing British conviction to lead was politically enabling in its ability to *acquiesce*. Third, Blair's language helped to render foreign policy communicable. Crafting a foreign policy discourse that meshed with the cultural terrain of the British political landscape ensured the government retained a level of legitimacy that enabled them to claim to speak for (the majority of) the people. Framing a foreign policy discourse *resonant* with Middle England was central to this task.

The second significant implication, presented by the findings of this article, concerns our understandings of New Labour as a political project. The foreign policy of New Labour was, of course, partially enabled by the political capital earned in landslide election victories. This

was not, however, sufficient of itself to make British participation in the ‘War on Terror’ possible. It is only necessary to consider the potentially fatal ramifications of widespread opposition to intervention in Iraq, as well as Blair’s Herculean efforts against it, to realise the increasing importance of foreign policy to New Labour as a political project. It is unsurprising that foreign policy was framed using a similar political strategy to that which had already proved electorally successful for domestic policies. I have argued that British foreign policy discourse under Blair was consistently framed with the domestic political landscape in mind as part of an ongoing quest for legitimacy. Specifically, British foreign policy discourse in the ‘War on Terror’ was framed to resonate with the key target audience of Middle Britain. Although this audience was not an objective socio-demographic category, but rather a constructed and fluid imagined political group, creating a foreign policy discourse resonant with the foreign policy culture of Middle Britain generated sufficient public support (or at least acquiescence) for Blair to continue to claim to speak for the people.

Thirdly, the article presents broader implications for International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis. Elements of British foreign policy were distinct and divergent from fellow coalition states in the ‘War on Terror’. Neither the United States nor Australia relied upon rationality, leadership and international community to the same extent as Britain.⁴ To elucidate and explicate these differences requires two fundamental considerations be taken into account. First, foreign policy is discursive. Recognising that foreign policy is not ‘actions’ alone, but rather the words that fill those actions with meaning, is crucial to revealing the heterogeneity of the coalition. Second, foreign policy is embedded in its domestic political and cultural context. Recognising that foreign policy discourse is both drawn from and framed to mesh with the contours of the domestic political landscape enables us to account for the distinct and divergent elements of British foreign policy discourse in the ‘War on Terror’. In short, this article advocates the analysis of foreign policy as culturally embedded discourse.

Lastly, it is important to note that, although a particularly skilled politician, the findings of this article are not isolated to Tony Blair. For instance, the importance of framing a resonant foreign policy discourse was not lost on Blair’s successor. Gordon Brown repeatedly paid for professional speech writing services from a ‘Washington-based speech-writing company called West Wing Writers’ in order to help ‘tailor speeches to US audiences’ (Nasaw 2009). It seemed to work. His ‘speech to the US Congress in March [2009] earned no fewer than 19 standing ovations, a congratulatory call from President Obama and plaudits for its command of global economics and rousing call to action’ (Nasaw 2009). This reaction, Nasaw (2009) argues, arises in part due to the fact that ‘in several instances the remarks betray subtle sensitivity to United States political sentiment’. It is unsurprising that a similar degree of care, time and effort is put into framing foreign policy discourse for British audiences. Language, alongside an awareness of the domestic political landscape and an ability to frame foreign policy to mesh with the cultural terrain, remains crucial to achieving the resonance that policies such as those of the ‘War on Terror’ require. This is why Blair’s nonchalant admission that, had he known Iraq did not possess WMD, ‘obviously you would have had to use and deploy different arguments’ should not have been unexpected. Throughout his prime ministership, Blair acted strategically when framing foreign policy. It was these strategic framings that were vital in helping to make British participation in the ‘War on Terror’ possible.

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¹ Exceptions, of course, exist. See Roe's argument that Operation Desert Fox was an instance of 'institutionalised securitisation', with the audience (the general public) 'for the most part excluded from the securitising process' (2008, 632).

² Of course, it is necessary to problematise the issue of 'authorship', given the numerous contributors to Blair's foreign policy speeches. In this instance, Lawrence Freedman drafted Blair's seminal 'Chicago Speech'. The roles played by Alastair Campbell, Anthony Giddens and later Phil Collins were all important for the successful crafting of a language that appealed to 'Middle England'. Despite the significant role played by speechwriters in modern British politics, Campbell, Giddens and especially Collins have reflected on the fact that Tony Blair always ensured that his own voice came through in the speech writing process (see e.g. Collins 2008).

³ Within this framing, Blair made frequent appeals to the *legality* of intervention under international law. He, at times, invoked elements of 'just war discourse' to emphasise the entirely *reasonable* nature of British foreign policy.

⁴ This insight highlights two important areas for future research. First, while Blair's ability to convince a majority of the population to support his foreign policy is an important measure, future research is needed on the resonance and impact of strategically crafted foreign policy discourse for particular audiences. Second, this

article has stressed that Blair's 'War on Terror' was necessarily distinct from other Coalition states. Future research should look beyond 2003 to consider whether Blair was caught in a web of his own weaving. Arguably, Blair's appearance at the Iraq Inquiry marks the pinnacle of a process of rhetorical entrapment. The decision to focus on legalistic, rational arguments centred on the presence of Iraqi WMD ultimately came to haunt Blair to a greater extent than Bush, who had relied more heavily on calls for regime change based on understandings of 'evil'.