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Argumentation and Fallacy in the Justification of the 2003 War on Iraq

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Abstract The present study examined how the pre-war debate of the US decision to invade Iraq (in March 2003) was discursively constructed in the US/British mainstream newspaper opinion/editorial (op/ed) argumentation. Drawing on theoretical insights from critical discourse analysis and argumentation theory, I problematised the fallacious discussion used in the pro-war op/eds to build up a 'moral/legal case' for war on Iraq based on adversarial (rather than dialogical) argumentation. The proponents of war deployed 'instrumental rationality' (ends-justify-means reasoning), 'ethical necessity' (Bush's 'Preemption Doctrine') and 'humanitarian virtue' (the bombing of Iraq to 'save' Iraqis from Saddam's pestilent tyranny) to justify the pending invasion of Iraq. Their arguments intertextually resonated with Bush administration's 'war on terror' rhetoric in a way that created a form of indexical association through 'recontextualisation'. The type of arguments marshalled by the pro-war op/ed commentators uncritically bolstered the set of US official 'truth claims' and 'presuppositions'.

Keywords Argumentation · Critical discourse analysis · Iraq war · Pragma-dialectics · Rhetoric · Media

1 Introduction

In the realm of foreign affairs, the media is supposed to play the role of 'watchdog', especially in cases where ordinary citizens are the least informed about the dynamics of international politics. However, media agents are not always disengaged observers who just chronicle and investigate political issues. They tend to be part of the dominant political institution in that media relations might become

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integral to policymaking and the media very often move away from their role as an independent "Fourth Estate" (Esser et al. 2001: 21) to the role of the state's 'guard dog'. The media's biased representation of a political issue can be achieved through filtering information, keeping 'argumentation' within the bounds of 'acceptable' premises and "inundating the media with stories which serve sometimes to foist a particular line and frame on the media" (Herman and Chomsky 1994: 23). Such 'framing' can also be exercised through confining contesting voices to 'non-speaking' roles (van Dijk 1987) by "a persistent use of sources representing the dominant perspective" (Noakes and Wilkins 2002: 660), based on an established hierarchy of 'credibility' (Greenberg and Hier 2001: 565).

For example, the media 'debate' of the prelude to the US-led war on Iraq in 2003 has clearly shown the crucial power of media influence on public opinion (see Kull et al. 2004) and, undoubtedly, on shaping official political decisions about war and peace (Goss 2002). While public opinion polls in Britain (e.g., *Guardian*/ICM poll) showed that only 29 % of the British people supported a potential US-led war on Iraq, more than 60 % of Americans (Pew Research Center 2004) did (cited in Fahmy and Kim 2008: 444). Moreover, even after the invasion of Iraq and the US failure to find the alleged Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), a large portion of Americans still believed that WMD were found in Iraq, that Saddam had close links with Al-Qaeda, and that world opinion supported Bush's war on Iraq (Kull et al. 2004: 575). In this sense, the framing of the Iraq conflict was mainly a cognitive process in that the ability of certain political actors to have privileged access to the media helped them channel their own views and beliefs into media texts in a way that conditioned the type of messages that obtained and the type of 'interpretive frameworks' made available to readers to be able to weigh political orientations and relevant attitudes vis-à-vis the unfolding political crisis.

However, it is claimed that "…[US] elite press…was, if anything, more consistently critical of the proposed attack [on Iraq] than the oppositional political elites" (Nikolaev and Porpora 2007: 23).[1] The present study extends the work of Nikolaev and Porpora by exploring how US-/British opinion/editorials (op/eds) debated the Bush administration's lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War. It also offers a more argumentation-oriented analysis of op/ed discourse that complements Nikolaev and Porpora's quantitative content/frame analysis. The goal of the present research is to unmask the dominant discursive practices that mediated the pre-war debate and address how op/ed 'argumentation' has provided a forum for 'critical reflection' on the US decision to attack Iraq.

2 Sample Materials

This study covers the period from 1 February 2003 to 20 March 2003 (the time period leading up to the formal declaration of the US invasion of Iraq). The corpus is retrieved from four prominent US/British daily broadsheet newspapers. Two papers from each country (the UK and the US) are selected, one known as being

[1] But, the authors also pointed that "morality and legality were marginalized" (ibid.: 20).

Table 1 Newspapers used in this study

Paper	Political leaning	Position	Articles
The New York Times	Liberal	Pro-war	362
The Washington Post	Conservative	Pro-war	174
The Times	Conservative	Pro-war	135
The Guardian	Liberal	Anti-war	139

'conservative' and the other as being 'liberal'. The conservative papers chosen were *The Times* and *The Washington Post*, respectively. As examples of the 'liberal' press, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* are selected. The selection of papers is based on (1) the 'quality' of coverage (nation-wide prestige and self-proclaimed 'paper of record' status); (2) 'political leaning' ('conservative' vs. 'liberal') and (3) individual papers' position vis-à-vis the Iraq conflict. Op/eds refer to both editorials and opinion pieces. Editorials are unsigned and represent the paper's perspective and opinion pieces are signed and represent the opinion of regular or guest columnists (Nikolaev and Porpora 2007: 7). Editorials constitute a newspaper genre of their own in that their purpose is to persuade the reader of the paper's position vis-à-vis certain controversial sociopolitical issues. Op/eds are schematically structured in that they first 'define the situation'; then, they 'summarise' the news event; and finally, an 'evaluation of the situation' is given, on the basis of which 'recommendations' for a course of action are highlighted. The editorial 'voice' of *The Guardian* is contained in its leader pages and op-ed columns, while the op/ed columns (and the *Features* rubric[2]) represent the 'voice' of *The Times*. Using the key word ''Iraq (editorial)" on a *Lexis Nexis* search, 362 (*NYT*) and 174 (*WP*) articles are identified. Searches using "Iraq (editorial or comment)" have yielded 135 op/ed and Feature articles (*Times*) and 139 (*Guardian*) op/ed articles from the selected period. All corpora include headlines and body texts. The newspapers used are represented in Table 1.

Given the space limits of this paper, my focus will be on "typical" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 171) US/British pro-war[3] editorials and opinion pieces. 'Typicality' is worked out by classifying articles into pro and anti-war op/eds, based on their overall position with reference to the US threat to invade Iraq. The analysis is done in the following steps. First, the argument structure of the sampled texts is mapped, based on the participants' shared starting points, common values and adequate substantiation of the proposed standpoints. Then, points at issue are determined and, next, the positions of the parties to the conflict are identified. Speech acts that are "immaterial to the resolution process" (van Eemeren et al. 1996: 291) are ignored. Arguments are addressed within their broader sociopolitical and historical context, instead of being treated as self-contained 'events'. In other words, the 'reconstruction' of argumentative texts involves a systematic interpretation of the discourse about Iraq War in the light of its pragma-dialectical objective. Finally, the dialectical 'reconstruction' of the text leads to spotting potential *fallacies* in the

[2] *Features* also contained opinion pieces (Schuetz 2005: 206).

[3] For anti-war argumentation, see Wilson et al. (2012).

argumentative moves conducted by the arguers. Before we proceed a definition of the term 'fallacy' is worthwhile. A 'fallacy' can be defined as a sequence of speech acts which undermine the opponent's effort to reach a rational resolution of a controversy or a difference of opinion (see van Eemeren et al. 1996: 299; Jacobs 2002: 122). Fallacies are what distinguish "those outcomes of argumentative engagement that are the result of *reflective*, *voluntary consent* from those outcomes that are the result of *manipulation, coercion, or inducement*" (Jacobs 2006: 426; italics added). However, fallacies are not always easily detectable. Some arguments might be flawed at some level while maintaining an appearance of reasonableness. In other words, effective 'rhetoric' can "adjust the conditions of the deliberation for the better" (Jacobs 2002: 125). For example, emotional appeals may actually prepare the audience for "the proper frame of mind" by drawing their attention to "the urgency of the situation" and "its moral gravity" (ibid.). Similarly, appeal to authority may relieve the audience from making their own decisions based on their reasoning through evidence (ibid.). Such "strategic manoeuvring" (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 1999, 2006), however, may lead to manipulative practices.

3 Pragma-Dialectics and the Function of Op/Ed Political Argumentation

In this section, my intention is to conduct a pragma-dialectical analysis of newspaper op/ed argumentation by grounding my approach within the broad theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which encourages the critical study of discourse within its discursive-historical context of production[4] (Wodak et al. 1999; Wodak and Meyer 2001). An attempt to extend CDA beyond lexico-grammatical analyses is made by introducing an argumentation component. In the light of the research findings, some light will be shed upon the place of rational argumentation in Iraq conflict resolution. Rational argumentation is defined as

> a communication activity in which disputants attempt to resolve their differences of opinion by putting forward arguments for and against their positions, testing the quality of those arguments, and coming to a mutual consensus of opinion based on the merits of the arguments made. (Jacobs and Aakhus 2002: 185)

Rational argumentation is, thus, a joint construction of a reasoned discourse by arguers who are ready to openly explore alternative points of view and cultivate decisive bases for decision, based on shared 'facts' and 'values' of the disputants and a consensual definition of the situation (Jacobs 2002: 124). Critical discussion is not "obstinate quarreling," "cynical sophistry," or "self-serving adversarial debate" (Jacobs and Aakhus 2002: 186). The unfolding debate about the Iraq War is approached as a 'critical discussion', aimed at a 'rational resolution' of a difference of opinion. Hence, analysis will target essential aspects of the pre-war

[4] For critical discourse analysts, political power and control cannot be divorced from the power of language. "Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a position; language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium" (Fowler 1991: 11).

op/ed arguments that violate both the propositional 'truthfulness' and 'procedural' prerequisites of 'critical discussion' (Jacobs 2006). The present study has revealed that arguers' resort to 'strategic manoeuvring' has resulted in the following fallacies: (1) *argumentum ad hominem,* which includes (a) direct personal attack and (b) casting suspicion on the other party's motives (*circumstantial ad hominem*); (2) resort to coercive means to settle a conflict of opinion (*argumentum ad baculum*); (3) *argumentum ad ignorantiam* (the argument for the acceptability of a conclusion on the basis of suggestive negative evidence); (4) s*ecundum quid* (hasty generalisation) and (5) *argumentum ad consequentiam*, which involves the use of an "inappropriate (causal) argumentation scheme by rejecting a descriptive standpoint because of its undesired consequences" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212). It includes (a) *the fallacy of militarist humanitarianism*, (b) *preemption slippery slope*, and (c) *the sunk costs* fallacy (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992;1995; 2004; Walton 1989). These main fallacies, together with the illustration of their realisation in text, are delineated below:

3.1 *Argumentum ad hominem*

Argumentum ad hominem involves "[d]oubting the expertise, intelligence, or good faith of the other party" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212) in an attempt to disqualify him as a legitimate interlocutor (van Eemeren et al. 2000: 420). It also involves irrelevant direct personal attack or accusation of inconsistent behaviour, as our examples below will demonstrate:

3.1.1 Direct ad hominem

Pro-war arguers tried to delegitimise the anti-war position by demonising their opponents (the Iraqi regime and 'Old European' political actors) and by discrediting anti-war political dissent and calling into question the moral authority of the United Nations Security Council (UN). *Ad hominem* fallacy, thus, occurs in such cases where the "premises are logically irrelevant to, and therefore incapable of establishing the truth of, their conclusions" (Copi 1986; cited in De Wijze 2003: 6). For example, the demonisation of Saddam does not relieve pro-war arguers from providing a sound justification for Bush's run-up to war (see Table 2).

Saddam was depicted as "an all-purpose political bogeyman" (Jones and Smith 2006: 1086). The negative overlexicalisation depicted Saddam within "discourses of malignity" (Fairclough 2005: 47). He is a 'war criminal' (law and order), an 'evildoer' (religion) and a 'dictator' (politics). Saddam was also categorised as an aberrant Muslim 'Other'. He was portrayed as (1) a human rights abuser, (2) a manipulator and instigator of Islamist terrorism, (3) an irrational miscalculator and (4) a bounder. While Bush was characterised in terms of his official status (President of the United States, Commander in Chief of the US armed forces, etc.), Saddam was deprived of any official 'status' and 'authority' ('Hussein', 'Saddam', 'the beast of Baghdad', etc.). Such "titulation" and "honorification" (van Leeuwen 1996) strategy functions as a discourse of 'investiture' by lending more authority to US political actors and depriving the Iraqi officials from any such symbolic power. The

Table 2 The demonisation of Saddam in US/British newspaper Op/Ed discourse

Opinion/editorial	Negative portrayal
Mary McGrory, *WP*, editorial, 6 Feb., 2003	Saddam is "a fiend" (*demonisation*)
Cohen, *WP*, Editorial, 11 March 2003	He is "a beast" (*dehumanisation*)
Cohen, *WP,* Editorial, 18 March 2003	Saddam's "barbaric regime … imminently or ultimately, threatens us all"
WP, editorial, 27 Feb. 2003	Saddam is "an outlaw dictator"
WP, 18 March, 2003	He is "a tyrant guilty of some of the most terrible human rights crimes" (*criminalisation*)
Clwyd, *Times*, Features, 18 March 2003	He is the leader of an "evil, fascist regime" (*Nazification/Nazi analogy*)
Safire, *NYT*, Editorial, 6 March 2003.	"Saddam's gangster government is an evil to be destroyed before it gains the power to destroy us." He is "a bloody-handed dictator" and "a thug in control of a crucial Middle Eastern nation."
Safire, *NYT*, Editorial, 20 February 2003	Saddam is "a cruel tyrant," "a genocidal maniac." He "oppressed and brutalized [23 million] Iraqis." He is "a monster in power," whose WMD "could someday obliterate New York." "Saddam harbors in Baghdad terrorists trained by and affiliated with Al Qaeda." He has been sending "rewards to families of suicide bombers" (*vilification*)
Ignatius, *WP*, Editorial, 18 March, 2003	The Iraq War would be a "war for drinkable water." Saddam presides over "a regime that throws children from helicopters to force their parents to confess"(the topos of '*Humanitarianism'*)
Hoagland, *WP*, Editorial, 6 March 2003	He is "one of history's greatest mass murderers"
Hoagland, *WP*, editorial, 23 Feb. 2003	Saddam is a self-proclaimed "munificent and mighty Saladin of our days," the "coming conqueror of the Crusaders" and the "silent partner of Osama"
Kelly, *WP*, Editorial, 19 March, 2003	"He is a nut to begin with …. He wanted to achieve fame as a modern Saladin, a restorer of Arab empire"
Friedman, *NYT*, Editorial, 5 January 2003	He is "an evil, megalomaniacal dictator," who "rules by fear." He "might acquire excessive influence over the natural resource that powers the world's industrial base"
Hume, *Times*, Features, 13 March 2003	He is the leader of an "evil, monstrous rapine regime"
Freedland, *Guardian*, Leader Pages, March 19, 2003	"Saddam is one of the cruellest butchers to walk the face of the earth"

emphasis put on Saddam's absolute 'irrationality' was mainly motivated by the need to convince the reader that he might pass the alleged WMD to Al-Qaeda.

The pro-war Manichean discourse was "pivotal to defining, establishing and maintaining a moral order, for the enemy is one who violates 'our' values" (Lazar and Lazar 2004: 227). However, by reinforcing certain assumptions about Saddam, the US/British newspaper op/eds' claim to 'moral' universalism conceals a particular construction of power relations through discourse. The argument is that Saddam's rule was cataclysmic and its survival was based on its ruthless treatment

of its repressed people. This narrative aims at mobilising the Western public by appealing to their sense of 'goodness' and readiness to come to the help of the oppressed distant 'cultural Others'. Such "narrative provides us with a sense of who 'we' are as subjects and offers us ways of thinking about our subjectivity in deeply ontological and teleological ways" (Greenberg and Hier 2001: 565). Hence, pro-war op/ed discourse constructed the relation between the 'Muslim World' and the West as a "clash between civilization and the lack thereof" (Mazid 2007: 368). It recontextualised Bush administration's 'war on terror' rhetoric that 'they' hate 'us' for 'what we stand for' rather than for 'our foreign policy.'

The Cold War script was projected onto Saddam in a way that gives the impression that such scripts are "abstract, schematic, hierarchically organized sets of propositions, of which the final nodes are empty (default values), so that they can be applied to different situations by filling in such terminal nodes with specific information" (van Dijk 1988: 21). However, the representation of a whole nation in the person of its head of state is favourable to the adoption of narratives that "treat news as dramas enacted between individuals in a void and eschew a more elaborated context that takes account of the complexity of worldly conditions" (Goss 2002: 93). Such *pars pro toto* synecdoche

> hides the internal structure of Iraq, and thus hides the actual people who will mostly be killed, maimed, or otherwise harmed in a war. It also hides the political divisions in Iraq between Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. [It] also hides the internal structure of the US, and therefore hides the fact that it is the poor and minorities who will make the most sacrifices while not getting any significant benefit. And it hides the main ideas that drive Middle Eastern politics. (Lakoff 1999: 17)

The 'othering' of Saddam failed to recognise that "many in the Arab world have long regarded him as the embodiment of the struggle to resist US domination" (Freedland, *Guardian*, 15 March 2003). Saddam is cynically depicted as a self-proclaimed Saladin of modern times and the Arab *Za'im* (leader) who promised to reinstate the Arab/Muslim lost 'Empire'. The Arab nationalists were also categorised as mere fanatic pan-Arabists. Consider Hoagland's claim below:

> 'Arabness' has become a restrictive and at times racialist concept for too many of [Arab] governments, politicians and intellectuals. It is the basis on which Saddam Hussein appeals to [them] to support and protect him and his murdering regime against the 'crusaders'. (Hoagland, *WP*, 9 Feb., 2003)

The "use of specific lexical variants" (van Dijk 2002: 232) "triggers a host of cognitive representations and strategies, and especially racist attitudes and ideologies" (ibid.) about the Arab/Muslim people. 'Overlexicalisation' also suggests "a preoccupation with a particular dimension of reality, which is often a site of ideological struggle and contestation" (Dunmire 2005: 494). Hoagland problematised Pan-Arabist nationalism by framing its hostility towards Zionism as grounded in Arab racism and not as resistance to Israeli occupation of Arab lands (see Coury 2005).

It is important to state here that pro-war op/eds, throughout the unfolding discussion, employed personal attack as a strategic manoeuvre to discredit their opponents (Saddam Hussein, Arab Nationalists, 'Old Europe,' anti-war arguers from British government (e.g., Clare Short and Robin Cook) and the UN) and avoid a serious discussion of their positions. Instead of opening a rational discussion, pro-war op/ed arguers used *ad hominem* defamation to support their positions. The *ad hominem* argument against Saddam, for example, is fallacious because there is a presupposition that because the person is untrustworthy, this necessarily entails that his argument that he has no WMD should be rejected regardless of its truthfulness or rationality. More importantly, the nature of the Iraqi regime is not the issue of discussion; the real issue is whether the US should invade a sovereign country to institute 'democracy,' regardless of the international community's opinion.

Personal defamation also targeted prominent anti-war political actors, both in UK and 'Old Europe'. For instance, Clare Short (the ex-British International Development Secretary) was referred to as "the people's peacenik," whose "angry rebel routine" won her the title of "Saint Clare of Ladywood". She sounded "as if she were a spokesman for Greenpeace" (Hume, *Times*, 13 March 2003). The "disloyal Ms Short" (*Times*, 11 March 2003) has a "short version" because her "not in my name" position was

> more a slogan of disengaged individuals who are opting out of the political battle than of those fighting for an alternative. So our moral Cabinet minister ends up hiding behind the bogus authority of the UN, waiting for unelected, unaccountable apparatchiks such as Hans Blix and Kofi Annan to pass judgment on Iraq before she can give the bombers her blessing. (Hume, *Times*, 13 March 2003)

While 'martial virtues' were associated with American 'heroism' and 'masculinity', anti-war protest and diplomacy became a sign of lack of 'masculinity' and a form of 'cowardice'. The US/British mainstream op/ed discourse demeaned France by qualifying the French as the anti-American "axis of weasels," and "a chorus of cowards." Such coalition of "wimps" is led by a bunch of "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" (cited in Younge and Henley, *Guardian*, Feb. 11, 2003). Hence, this polarised reasoning placed "the voices for peace, both in the US and Europe, on a devalued, feminized footing and by casting the [US] Administration's posture of masculinity as the multivalent, but quintessentially American, 'cowboy'"[5] (Christensen and Ferree 2008: 288). Actually, there is nothing 'heroic' about bombing a sanctions-drained Iraq. On the contrary, attacking "a couple of demoralised [Iraqi] foot soldiers is like using napalm on a *cockroach* hiding under the kitchen sink" (Kite, *Times,* 19 March 2003; italics added).

Similarly, Hans Blix (the then head of UNMOVIC) was categorised as "the Great Equivocator" (Kelly, *WP*, 12 March 2003), who was doing "more damage to the Security Council" (Hoagland, *WP,* 13 March 2003). His "reports to the council

[5] For example, the depiction of Iraqi men during the war as the main suffering subjects "over-masculinised" post-9/11 America in that the deployed "emasculating discourse" served "the testosterone-ridden military initiative of the US in its bid to demoralize and destroy its enemies and raise the morale of its soldiers" (Youssef 2008: 162).

have been constructed as arguments for continued inspections, rather than as reports on Iraq's compliance. Mr. Blix has dodged repeated requests that he judge Iraq against the terms of Resolution 1441" (*WP*, 11 March 2003). Such negative representation was also extended to Mohamed El- Baradei (the ex-Director General of the IAEA), who was accused of "turning on Iraq's accusers" and arguing "against the logic of Resolution 1441, saying that inspectors could be used to contain Iraq even if Saddam Hussein didn't cooperate" (*WP*, 11 March 2003). El- Baradei was attacked because he qualified the US claim that Iraq attempted to obtain "500 tons of yellowcake" (Pfiffner 2004: 32–33) from Niger as a mere forgery. *WP* argued that such US allegation was as a 'secondary piece of evidence' despite the fact that it was, actually, part of Bush's State of the Union Address (28 January, 2003).

Jack Chirac got the lion's share of defamation in 'Old Europe.' He was described as a "Eurosceptic," who suddenly metamorphosed into "a committed European integrationist" and "a lifelong political cynic transformed into an international visionary" (Macintyre, *Times*, 15 March 2003). It is claimed that Chirac's "40 years in politics were often lapped by sleaze" (ibid.). He "never achieved anything very substantial. Even his nickname, 'Le Bulldozer' suggested dogged determination rather than talent" (ibid.). Unlike "intellectuals such as Francois Mitterrand," his "ropey career" made him a "self-hating" "lightweight" and a mere "party technician" (ibid.). Macintyre argued that Chirac was not 'genuinely' liked in France, and that his "5 years of unhappy cohabitation with a Socialist prime minister" delegitimised his leadership (ibid.). He was also "named in numerous corruption investigations. Derided as a 'Super-liar,' he was dismissed, painfully, by his presidential opponent as 'aged, wasted, and tired'" (ibid.). It was only the French electorate's fear to play in the hands of Jean-Marie Le Pen which enabled him to gain "a whopping 82 % in the runoff", but it was "an ugly, uncomfortable return to the Elysee, brought about by left-wingers holding their noses and declaring: "Vote for the crook, not the fascist"" (ibid.). Chirac was also described as "clinging to a status" that "is eroding", the wish to restore the French-German domination of Europe (Will, *WP*, 23 February 2003). Hence, in metaphorical terms,

> He's like a man smoking a cigarette after making love. The Lothario who did not love himself has now fallen head over heels, and is playing the moment for all it is worth, unconcerned about the wider outcome: the impact on the UN, the long-term crisis in relations with the US and Britain, and the wreckage of the concept of a European foreign policy. (Macintyre, *Times*, 15 March 2003)

Therefore, the argument is that Chirac's "ineffective high moral lectures" (Mandelson, *Guardian*, 10 March 2003) would not hide the "ploy by the French to save their great, greasy oil contracts with their client-tyrant Saddam Hussein" (Kelly, *WP*, 12 March 2003). Chirac was criticised for playing in the hands of Saddam for self-gratifying 'venal' reasons (the topos of *pro bono eorum:* "to the advantage of them") (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 75). The argumentation scheme for this direct *ad hominem* defamation can be represented as follows (Walton 2004: 361):

The respondent (Chirac) is a person of bad character [he has always been a 'good' ally of Saddam and he adopted an anti-Iraq War position for venal reasons].

Therefore, the respondent's anti-war argument should not be accepted.

Fig. 1 Direct *argumentum ad hominem*

Besides, name-calling is a stigmatising strategy in that "[n]icknames need not be justified, neither can they be contradicted or disproved" (Sornig 1989: 100). Macintyre's argument is fallacious because it *irrelevantly* casts doubt on Chirac's competence and character instead of addressing his anti-war standpoint. Its function is to ridicule the opponent, and hence, it violates proper rules of social exchange (i.e., politeness) (Whaley and Wagner 2000: 69). In other words, "the line between more or less plausible argumentation and fallacies (*argumenta ad x*) cannot be drawn clearly in any case, especially where prejudiced predications are part of the argumentation schemes" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 75).

3.1.2 Circumstantial ad hominem

Circumstantial argumentum ad hominem fallacy combines argument from commitment and personal attack (direct *ad hominem*) (Walton 2004: 364). To illustrate this fallacy, consider the French anti-war position (expressed by the ex-foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin), which reads as follows:

> We cannot accept the British proposals as they are based on a logic of an automatic recourse to force. It's not a question of giving Iraq a few more days before committing to using force. It's about making resolute progress towards peaceful disarmament, mapped out by inspections that offer a credible alternative to war. (cited in Henley and Wintour, *Guardian*, 14 March 2003)

In response, Rees-Mogg argued that "[i]t is hardly possible to find a distinction in international law which would make Kosovo legal but the projected intervention in Iraq illegal. That is a problem for the French, who supported the action in Kosovo…" (Rees-Mogg, *Times*, 17 March 2003). Mogg's argument is fallacious (*circumstantial argumentum ad hominem*), and it can be schematised as follows (Walton 2004: 364):

a (the French) advocate argument α (The UN inspections are a credible alternative to war), which has proposition A ('an invasion of Iraq without a UN mandate would be a violation of international law') as its conclusion.
a (the French) have carried out an action or set of actions (agreed to the bombing of Kosovo without UN backing; invaded Ivory Coast without the UN mandate, etc.) that imply that *a* (the French) are personally committed to not-*A* ("If Kosovo was legal, Iraq will be legal as well" (Rees-Mogg, ibid.)).
Therefore, *a* (the French) are inconsistent and their argument α ('invading Iraq without a UN authorisation is illegal') is not acceptable.

Fig. 2 Argumentation scheme for the Circumstantial ad hominem argument

This defamation strategy is a "form of argument … used by one party to infer that the other is committed to a certain proposition, based on what the other has said or done in the past" (Walton 2004: 362). However, while in the case of Kosovo, a humanitarian exception justified bypassing the Security Council, in the Iraq case no such 'humanitarian' argument could be defensible. *Circumstantial ad hominem* can also point to inconsistencies in the other party's current position and his former practices or commitments (*tu quoque* variant of the *ad hominem* fallacy). Such a tu quoque ad hominem argument is used by pro-war op/ed arguers. For example, it is argued that the US should invade Iraq without the UN authorisation simply because that is what France, Russia and China did when they intervened in Ivory Coast, Chechnya and Tibet, respectively (Will, *WP*, 4 March 2003). One might argue (reviewer's comment) that in this case there is a clear "presumptive appeal to a precedent, to plead for exemption from the established [UN] rule" (Walton 1996: 94). However, I think that Kagan's argument does not involve an appeal to a historical/legal precedent because the invoked precedent would only undermine his position because its legality is widely contested (unlike in the case of the Kosovo analogy, for example). More importantly, analogical reasoning acquires its legitimacy through the exchange of arguments between the involved parties (Kagan and potential anti-war arguers). Thus, the more plausible interpretation of Kagan's argument might be within the *ad hominem tu quoque* fallacy because he is trying to silence his opponents and prevent them from advancing their standpoints or casting doubt on his pro-war position (by pointing out to alleged inconsistencies in the opponents' opinions on similar issues to undermine their credibility). This is also a clear violation of the first pragma-dialectical rule for critical discussion. In addition, a *tu quoque* fallacy involves the claim that "two wrongs make a right" (The US should disregard UN laws because they are rarely obeyed by other powerful states).

Therefore, it is clear that "the application of morally- or ideologically-loaded categorisations potentially undermin[es] the legitimacy of an individual's or group's right to contribute to a political debate" (Burridge 2007: 202). When there is a threat or moral blackmail, the *argumentum ad baculum* ("the fallacy of the *stick*") obtains.

3.2 *Argumentum ad baculum* and the Ticking 'Timebomb' Argument

Argumentum ad baculum involves "an attempt to win assent for a conclusion by appealing to force or by issuing threats concerning the consequence that will follow if the conclusion is not accepted" (Bunnin and Yu 2004: 48). It is the fallacy committed when one resorts to "putting pressure on the other party by threatening him with sanctions" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212–216) to cause the acceptance of a conclusion. The problem with *argumentum ad baculum* is not with its "inferential form" or the "truth" of its premises. Rather, such moves "shut down critical deliberation of the adequacy of the standpoints in question" (Jacobs 2002: 122) in that they "violate rules of proper procedural functioning" (ibid.) of rational discussion by opting for "arguments from prudence" or "arguments from

self-interest" (Woods 1998: 496; see also Wilson et al. 2012). Consider the following arguments:

> We do not have the option of holding time still. (…) every day Saddam Hussein stays in power he grows richer, the global terrorist network to which he has access plans further atrocities and (international inspections notwithstanding) the chance of his acquiring nuclear, chemical and biological weapons grows. (Bobbitt, *NYT*, 10 March 2003).
>
> If a terrorist were to detonate a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb in Grand Central Station, about half a million people would die immediately – roughly equivalent to the population of Washington, D.C. Much of Manhattan would be destroyed, and depending on the prevailing winds the rest of the island might have to be evacuated. Hundreds of thousands more would die of burns and exposure to radiation. The direct economic effects would surpass $ 1 trillion, or one-tenth of the nation's annual economic output. Indirect effects – if, say, the terrorists threatened to destroy another city – would be much higher. (Hiatt, *WP*, 17 March 2003)
>
> We must combine our understanding of Hussein with an understanding of the impact his weapons would have on Americans. In theory, just a single gram of botulinum toxin – the deadliest toxin known to science – could kill 1 million people if released into the air. Once the toxin enters the body it binds to nerve endings where they join with muscles. Victims would experience double or blurred vision, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, nausea, vomiting and muscle weakness. If untreated, the disease will paralyze the arms, legs, trunk and respiratory muscles, perhaps resulting in suffocation. There is no reliable vaccine. (Frist, *WP*, 16 March 2003)

The Saddam Peril argument created a fake sense of urgency ("we do not have the option of holding time still"), which was "quasi-objectified with numbers" (*argumentum ad numerum*) (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 188). The *topos of danger* is based on the argument that "if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them" (ibid.: 77). Hence, this is a fallacy of *argumentum ad baculum* in its wider sense (ibid.) in that the *topos of numbers* is combined with *argumentum ad populum* by appealing to people's survival instincts, their anxieties and insecurities rather than to their rational consent. Such "presumptive and defeasible type of reasoning" "shifts a burden of proof in dialogue" and "lends itself to fallacious variants that utilize tactics of intimidation or scaremongering, exploiting a respondent's insecurity or fear" (Walton 1996: 76–77). This prudential argument "is aimed directly at an audience" (a third party) and "the conclusion hinges on the undesirability of the result" (Tindale 2005: 37).

Therefore, this *argumentum ad baculum, targeting* American anti-war protesters, can be regarded as a 'prudential' argument that can be reconstructed as follows (see Woods 1998: 496):

1. If you [Americans] do action *A* [mount a resistance against Bush's decision to invade Iraq), then consequence *C* [the global terrorist network to which Saddam has access will plan further atrocities against the United States], which lies in [Saddam's] power to exact, or which will come about from other factors pertaining to your situation, will also occur.
2. The occurrence of *C* would be sufficiently contrary to your interests to make it reasonable for you not to do *A*.
3. Therefore, it is reasonable for you not to do *A*.

Fig. 3 Prudential *argumentum ad baculum*

The use of such 'argumentation from consequence' is fallacious because invoking apocalyptic scenarios of potential terrorist attacks against the US only serves to scare people into impulsive behaviour. Hence, "the subjective reaction desired is terrified action rather than genuine assent" (Jackson 2007: 44). Such "scare-for-salvation tactics" (ibid.: 45) were intensified by the force of 'certainty' about Saddam's potential WMD attack against the United States. In other words, a trade-off between security and opposition to the US war on Iraq is suggested. "Premediation" of American cities falling under Islamic terrorist attacks has helped activate a cultural imag(in)ing of "catastrophic futures about to unfold" (De Goede 2008: 169). However, 'premediation' served an ideological function: that of "enabling action in the present by visualizing and drawing on multiple imagined futures" (ibid.: 158). That is, "the imagination of some scenarios *over others*, the visualization of some futures *and not others*, entails profoundly political work that enables and constrains political decision-making in the present" (ibid.: 171; italics added). The imagining of "chemical missiles that never leave their launching pad" (Neiger 2007: 310) blurs the "dividing line between current and future events" (ibid.: 313), between 'fact' and 'speculation'. 'Islamist terrorism' is depicted as an "enemy of its own making" (Jones and Smith 2006: 1089). It is dehistoricised by transforming it from a tactic into an "existential threat" (Neiger 2007: 317), a "lifestyle" and "a condition of the world" (Altheide and Grimes 2005: 620).

This alarmist discourse above helps to "provide a fertile ground for media spinning, scrambling for resources, political trial balloons, scaring the public, creating solidarity, and diverting attention from unsavory acts of [the US] government" (Neiger 2007: 310). The US media-driven fear-mongering has inaugurated a phase of the "securitisation of the unconscious" by "rendering the unconscious an additional domain of US security practices" (Weber 2005: 483). This imagination of an enemy within fosters a "productive economy of fear" (De Goede 2008: 162). The question that imposes itself is: "Why do the liberal interventionists who fear that Saddam Hussein might one day deploy a weapon of mass destruction refuse to see that George Bush is threatening to do just this against an ever-growing number of states?" (Monbiot, *Guardian*, 11 March 2003). Another way of shifting the burden of proof or pressuring for a fallacious conclusion is through resort to *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, as we shall see below.

3.3 *Argumentum ad ignorantiam*

A discussant commits an *argumentum ad ignorantiam* fallacy "by concluding that a standpoint is true just because the opposite has not been successfully defended" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212–216). The classical McCarthy anti-communist hearings of the early 1950's illustrate the fallaciousness of "argument from ignorance" in that "a person was accused on the grounds that there was nothing in McCarthy's files to disprove his Communist sympathies"[6] (Walton 1999: 367). Accusing people of such a serious crime "should have a burden of proof attached to it" (ibid.). Hence, arguments of this type appear to also "involve a reversal of burden of proof" (ibid.: 368). In other words, a version of *argumentum ad ignorantiam* can take the form of "proposition A is not known (proved) to be true (false), therefore A is false (true)" (Walton 1999: 368). This fallacy is predominant in cases that conclude, for example, that Saddam had WMD simply because he could not prove otherwise. The argument that Saddam was in "material breach of international obligations" (Will, *WP*, 4 March 2003) because he failed to list "the locations, amounts and types of all [his] chemical and biological weapons and 'nuclear weapons-usable' materials" and disclose "the location of Scud and other ballistic missiles with ranges exceeding 90 miles" (ibid.) is fallacious because it is the US which should provide evidence for its allegations against Saddam (a shift of burden of proof might also obtain here). A variant of *argumentum ad ignorantiam* fallacy can be found in Jenkins's article:

> He [Saddam] continued to develop chemical and biological weapons and to seek a nuclear capability. For all his promises, including to the UN last October, he has plainly treated inspection as a game of deception not co-operation. Within the terms of 1441, the burden of proof is no longer on the inspectors to find weapons, but on Saddam to show where they have gone. (Jenkins, *Times*, 7 March, 2003)

Jenkins's example illustrates how pro-war arguers violate rational reasoning by wrongly assuming that Saddam possesses WMD (i.e. by presenting such a claim as a starting point and arguing that Saddam is under the obligation to show where his alleged WMD have gone). In this case one can argue that the proposition 'Saddam had WMD' is true simply on the basis that it has not been proved false (argument from ignorance). The UN inspections' failure to find Saddam's alleged WMD further affirms Saddam's 'deceitful' character. In other words, "claims regarding Iraqi WMD take the form of assertions based not so much on hard evidence as on a suggestive lack of evidence" (Hartnett and Stengrim 2004: 168). Saddam's skewed image feeds upon stereotypical perceptions about Muslim leaders in media discourse (see Brookes 1995, for how African leaders are portrayed in Western media). It is unconvincing to argue that "simply because we have no evidence that

[6] Like McCarthy, Collin Powell showed up at the UN Security Council with a pile of poor 'intelligence' files he claimed would yield irrefutable evidence that Saddam had WMD. These pieces of 'evidence', however, were mere speculations based on phone interceptions, satellite pictures of areas beyond the zone under Saddam's control.

flying pigs do not exist outside our solar system" that "we should conclude that they do" (Hahn and Oaksford 2007: 708).[7]

'Negative evidence' arguments can also take the form of *ex silentio* arguments (*argumentum ex silentio*). An instance of *ex silentio* argumentation related to terrorism is when "failure to speak out confers upon all Muslims the 'guilty' actions of a few"[8] (Meer 2006: 50). This *argumentum ex silentio* is deployed by Colbert King when he implicitly accused St. Anne's audience of being 'anti-Semitic' because of their failure to speak out against Moran's anti-war argument and the role of the Jewish lobby in Bush's decision to invade Iraq. His argument reads as follows:

> What part of Moran's libel against the Jewish community did the St. Anne's audience not understand? And if they heard him single out Jews as a pro-war group that has disproportionate control over the US government, why didn't they react to that blatant lie – unless, perhaps, they believed it to be the truth? (King, *WP*, Editorial, 15 March 2003)

Faulty hasty generalisations of judgement of a social group based on its ethnic or religious affiliation are also found in *secundum quid* fallacy, as demonstrated below.

3.4 *Secundum Quid*

This fallacy involves "[u]sing the appropriate argumentation scheme of concomitance incorrectly by making generalizations based upon observations that are not representative or not sufficient" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212–216). For example, Hoagland argued that

> Americans and Europeans dismiss the insults and accusations that Arab leaders hurl at one another at public gatherings and summits as angry and even irrational outbursts. But when the Iraqi vice president recently called Kuwait's leaders "monkeys" and questioned the virility of a Kuwaiti minister's mustache, there was as much calculation as anger in his remarks. (Hoagland, *WP*, 20 March 2003).

Izzat Ibrahim (then vice-president of Iraq) verbally abused Al-Ahmed of Kuwait because the latter, in his statement at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, endorsed the proposal by the United Arab Emirates that Saddam should go to exile and allow the UN and Arab League to administer Iraq until an interim government is elected (Ezzat, *Al-Ahram Weekly*: 6–12 March 2003). Such a position was already disregarded in the Arab League meeting because it was a very sensitive issue. The fallacy lies in the fact that such an 'episode' of a Middle Eastern political life was "functionalized" (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999: 110) by Hoagland by projecting it onto the whole Arab political scene, thereby making a formally unfounded inference from part to the whole. Hoagland seems to argue that if most Westerners

[7] "[t]here is one special context where *ad ignorantiam* is not a fallacious mode of reasoning, namely in the courts" (Woods and Walton 1989: 168). A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

[8] This can also be regarded as a form of hasty generalisation (secundum quid).

would find Izzat's behaviour unacceptable, then it must be characteristically non-Western or Muslim. Such an argument constructs Muslims as being strangers to the norms of 'civility' and 'rationality.' Their tendency towards verbosity and tribal antagonism is the opposite of Western norms of rational dialogue and consensus (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998: 19).

It was also argued that "Iraqi weapons scientists" who would "find themselves unemployed and impoverished in the aftermath of an invasion" "could be tempted to sell their lethal expertise to the highest bidder" (Tucker, *WP*, 14 March 2003). Tucker warned that this "specter of 'brain drain'" might lead to the promotion of WMD if the US could not devise "a plan for preventing the dispersal of these scientists and their deadly knowledge" (ibid.). Hence, unlike American scientists who would generally be individualised and praised for their valuable scientific expertise, the Iraqi educated elite were 'genericised' (van Leeuwen 2003: 318) and demonised in that they were portrayed as a potentially 'corrupt' and 'irrational' homogenous group (*secundum quid* fallacy). The use of *disease/germ* metaphor conjures up a whole array of associated meanings which resonates with the constructed frame. It invokes fear of lethal contamination ('dispersal'), and hence represents Iraqi scientists as another legitimate target of destruction (the subsequent targeting of Iraqi scientists during the US occupation of Iraq lends ample evidence to this claim). Intertextually, this argument alludes to the affair of "A. Q. khan nexus in Pakistan,[9]" which was accused of illegal trafficking in nuclear expertise (Hitchens 2005: 35).

This neo-Orientalist narrative constructs the Muslim world as mere "security commodities" and "geographical abstractions," which "need to be 'domesticated', controlled, invaded or bombed rather than understood in their complex reality" (O′Tuathail and Agnew 1998: 82). The "politics of fear also facilitated a contentious foreign policy legitimating the 2003 invasion of Iraq, on the grounds of necessary pre-emptive military action against all potential sources of threat and instability" (Jones and Smith 2006: 1086). This *argument from consequence* is delineated in the following part.

3.5 *Argumentum ad consequentiam*

Ethical issues have always been at the forefront of Western politicians' minds when dealing with the 'Muslim World'. However, in contrast to ethics of 'just war', pro-war op/ed debaters sought to normalise the US threat to bomb Iraq by arguing for a politics in which violence plays a vital instrumental role to achieve the desired political ends. Instances of fallacious instrumental/consequentialist reasoning are illustrated in what follows.

3.5.1 The Fallacy of Militarist 'Humanitarianism'

Pro-war arguers deployed a 'human rightist' narrative to justify their position vis-à-vis the unfolding Iraq crisis. However, their claims are based on unwarranted

[9] This "argument from example" is "inherently weak" because it fails to "confirm a claim conclusively" (Walton 1996: 50).

presupposition (e.g., Saddam's possession of WMD, which turned out to be mere 'weapons of mass deception'). Consider the following illustrations:

> The removal of Saddam Hussein would… free millions of Iraqis from deprivation and oppression and make possible a broader movement to reshape the Arab Middle East, where political and economic backwardness have done much to spawn extremists such as al Qaeda. (*WP*, 5 February 2003).
> The Iraqis would be much better off after an invasion than they would be living indefinitely chained to Saddam Hussein. For us, though we live in relative tranquillity at present, we will at least be far less badly off in the future if we act now. (Bobbitt, *NYT*, 10 March 2003)
> … the reward, if America and its allies can sustain their commitment, will also be great: the end of a despot who has haunted a people, and the world, far too long. (*WP*, 20 March 2003)
> removing Saddam Hussein and helping Iraq replace his regime with a decent, accountable government that can serve as a model in the Middle East is worth doing – not because Iraq threatens us with its weapons, but because we are threatened by a collection of failing Arab-Muslim states, which churn out way too many young people who feel humiliated, voiceless and left behind. (Friedman, *NYT*, 19 March 2003)

Pro-war arguers invite the reader to weigh the possible 'consequences' of (in)action. The problem with such a position, however, is that it judges the war based on the cost/benefit calculation rather than from a principled (legal/ethical) perspective. Another problem relates to the fact that testing an assertion (we must topple Saddam) by pointing out to the undesirable *consequences* of leaving Saddam in power (evaluative proposition) confuses *facts* with *value judgements*. Bobbitt, for example, failed to commit himself to certain standards of 'reasonableness' because unprovoked military action against a sovereign state, besides being illegal, would not necessarily lead to the presupposed consequence (Saddam would develop WMD if war was averted). Hence, the inferential link is faulty. More importantly, "[a]ctors discussing the morally right thing to do are no longer asking how costly or beneficial alternative actions are to themselves" (Porpora and Nikolaev 2008: 169). In the arguments above, *argumentum ad consequentiam* fallacy take the form of a dialectical sequence as follows (Walton 1996: 194):

> Military action against Iraq (*A*) has good consequences, (i.e., *A* leads to a goal *Go* ['liberation' of Iraq and the discarding of a potential disastrous 'Saddam threat'] which is good from the point of view of 'our' side).

Fig. 4 Pro-war ad consequentiam argument

However, the pro-war disputants failed to conduct a rational debate grounded in common values and acceptable evidence by falsely presenting 'standpoints' as starting points agreed by the discussants (e.g., Saddam has WMD, Arabs will welcome a liberating US army, the US is committed to 'democratise' Arabia, etc.). They failed to negotiate and argumentatively construe 'taken-for granted' standpoints. For example, they failed to justify "[w]hy has the bombing of Iraq, rather than feeding the hungry,

providing clean water or preventing disease, become the world's most urgent humanitarian concern? (Monbiot, *Guardian,* 18 Feb. 2003). The fear is that the alleged US "cure of liberation" from "the disease of oppression" might eventually be a mere "mission of greed and exploitation" and a "galloping spirit of interventionism" to advance "great power self-interest" rather than a real "altruist" project (Freedland, *Guardian*, 8 March 2003). The anti-war position can easily counter the pro-war prudential argument as follows (Walton 1996: 195):

> Action *A* [the invasion of Iraq] has bad consequences [at the legal, moral, ecological … levels], and these bad consequences are a sufficient reason for not carrying out *A*.

Fig. 5 Anti-war argument

Pro-war arguers "strategically" and "obliquely" introduced into their arguments "presuppositions which may not be true at all" (van Dijk 1998: 34), but which are 'ideologically' coherent with regards to the pro-war stance they were defending (see Bekalu 2006 and Simon-Vandenbergen et al. 2007). They claimed that a US-led potential war against Iraq would be a 'just war' because it would be in consistency with *jus ad bellum* requirement in that it would serve a 'just cause' ('liberate' Iraqis from Saddam's oppression). However, the US 'humanitarian' case for war against Iraq falls short of the conditions set out by the 'just war' theory. First, Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force in international conflict resolution, except in legitimate self-defence against an armed attack that *has occurred* (Chapter 7, Article 51 of the UN Charter, 1945) and when a UN Security Council authorisation is *explicitly* granted (Article 39) (Bellamy 2004: 143; Bjola 2005: 285). Besides, humanitarian intervention may be undertaken as a means to stop an ongoing or imminent mass killing (as in the case of Bosnia, Rwanda, Libya or Syria) and not to prevent foreseeable future risks (Roth 2005: 338) or for the sake of instituting 'democracy,' free enterprise or social justice in Iraq (Janse 2006: 674). The 'human rightist' discourse also advocates preemptive military action as the 'lesser evil' option, as I will delineate below.

3.5.2 Preemption Slippery Slope

Preemption argument presumes that the US has the right to overthrow Saddam to prevent a potential attack on the US soil. The argument was that the US would not wait for a 'smoking gun' to turn into a 'mushroom' cloud. To justify this position, a 'lesser evil' argument was put forward:

> Saddam Hussein, if left unchecked, could execute or facilitate an even more damaging assault [than 9/11] with weapons of mass destruction. (Broder, *WP*, 11 March 2003)
> Saddam is a genocidal butcher, whose removal will almost certainly save far more lives than it destroys. (Kaletsky, *Times*, 20 March 2003)
> … if we leave Iraq with chemical and biological weapons, after 12 years of defiance, there is a considerable risk that one day these weapons will fall into

> the wrong hands and put many more lives at risk than will be lost in overthrowing Saddam. (Clinton, *Guardian*, 18 March 2003)
> We have ample reason to believe that Saddam's gangster government is an evil to be destroyed before it gains the power to destroy us.[…] Either we will allow him [Saddam] to become capable[10] of inflicting horrendous casualties in our cities tomorrow – or we must inflict and accept far fewer casualties in his cities today. (Safire, *NYT*, 6 March 2003)

Slippery slope arguments have played a central role in the debate over the legitimacy of US attacks against Iraq. Such *slippery slope* arguments above warn that if 'we' choose to remain indifferent to Saddam's growing threat, 'we' will find ourselves "caught up in a sequence of consequences leading to a disastrous (dangerous, horrible) outcome" (Walton 1996: 96). The *slippery slope* arguments above involve the use of an "appropriate argumentation scheme of causality (argument from consequence) incorrectly by erroneously suggesting that by taking the proposed course of action [avert war] one will be going from bad to worse" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 212–216). That is, waiting for the UN inspection to disarm Saddam would only give him time to plan a terrorist attack on America. The rejection of the anti-war position, hence, is based on its undesired consequences. The claim is that the US-led invasion of Iraq would meet the *jus in bello* requirement (the benefits the invasion would unleash upon Iraqis would proportionally outweigh the 'collateral damage' it would cause and 'civilian immunity' would be respected). However, the 'lesser evil' rationale assumes that narrow 'national interests' should be promoted, irrespective of the legitimacy of the means deployed in their pursuit (Porpora and Nikolaev 2008: 168). This preemption slippery slope can be represented as follows (Lafollette 2005: 478):

1. Action *X* (averting war) is *prima facie* politically/morally desirable.
2. But [disclaimer], if we do *X* (If we tolerate Saddam's WMD threat and listen to France's moral 'lecturing', etc.), then, a sequence of closely related consequences *Y* will (probably) follow (Saddam will be emboldened beyond control; he might pass his alleged WMD to Al-Qaeda, we will be sending wrong messages to other 'rogue' regimes that defying the U.S. can go unpunished, etc.).
3. Circumstances *Y* are immoral and undesirable.
4. Therefore, action *X* is (probably) immoral and unacceptable.

Fig. 6 Slippery slope fallacy

Clinton claims that US pro-war position was taken 'reluctantly' (it came after 12 years of Saddam's defiance of the UN). He also seems to suggest that US

[10] According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (2002) report, while Iraq military expenditures reached about $19 billion per year between 1980 and 1990, by 1995 Iraq military budget was only $1.5 billion (cited in Hartnett and Stengrim 2004: 166).

'national security' is above any other consideration (it overrides international law and it ignores the rights of civilian Iraqis to security). Because the consequences of a probable attack by Saddam might be so dreadful, the mere intention to avoid such a risk is sufficient enough to justify 'our' first-strike 'preventive' action. However, 'preemption doctrine' violates the 'just war' criterion of 'war as last resort'. Besides, 'preventive war' is based on "an exceptionalist premise, suggesting that the American quest of military dominance is permissible while others' quests are not" (Miller 2008: 53). Hence, assigning the US the prerogative to strike first would only force non-nuclear states (e.g., Iran and North Korea) to develop the WMD capacity to deter any potential foreign military incursion. Preventive war, thus, "creates the illusion of safety while increasing incentives for war preparation and a quest for advantage" (ibid.: 52).

Thus, it might be argued that pro-war "slippery slope arguments … are poor substitutes for a careful assessment of risk" (Lafollette 2005: 496), which would sound like (see Wilson et al. 2012):

> Standpoint: Decision X (allowing UN inspections to 'disarm' Iraq peacefully) is desirable and Decision X′ (a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq to effect regime change) is undesirable.
> Because: Decision X′ would lead to the result Y′ ('war of aggression', nuclear arms race and a 'civilisational' war between Islam and the West.)
> And: the result Y′ is undesirable.

Fig. 7 Anti-war argument from consequence

It is clear from the arguments above that exerting 'strategic influence' by engaging motivations other than consensus-oriented communication (e.g., reward or punishment) is the dominant mode of reasoning. However, the problem is that such a perspective orient arguers towards 'power claims' and this relieves the powerful arguer from his obligation to come up with 'rationally-motivated' claims (Hove 2008: 247). Such "relief mechanism," thus, deprives mediated Iraq political debate of "several important cognitive, normative, and interactive features essential to [rational discussion]" (ibid.: 249).

The pro-war position has also marshalled an 'argument from waste' or 'sunk costs' arguments to justify the invasion of Iraq.

3.5.3 The Sunk Costs Fallacy

The 'sunk costs' fallacy or 'argument from waste' is known as 'the Concorde fallacy' (the British and French governments remained committed to the supersonic jet project, even after it became clear that it would fail, simply because so much money had already been spent on it by that point) (Walton 2002: 475). The fallaciousness of 'sunk costs' arguments, however, remains context-dependent. For example, in the legal or political decision-making, past decisions might rightly precommit legislative bodies to act in accord with previous self-binding acts (ethical sunk costs). On the other hand, in the stock market domain, if an investor bought stocks at a high cost and they go down, selling or not should depend on their future

prospects, not on the fact that he has already sunk much money that he should not withdraw his investment at this point (Walton 2002: 477–479). Similarly, Iraq War supporters argued that 'we' had already come too far to give up now. They marshalled a 'sunk costs' argument that "the human, financial and political costs of packing up and coming home would outweigh the costs of going ahead" (Hoagland, *WP*, 6 March 2003). They argued that

> However unwise the course of action we have followed in the Iraq crisis to this point, the consequences of backing down now would be horrific. Saddam Hussein would … be emboldened to pursue weapons of mass destruction and surely to give terrorists access to them as well. … What is more, our ability to deter other rogue states would be deeply compromised by the shattering of our international credibility. (Kagan, *WP*, 18 March 2003)

'Sunk costs' argument is "an argument about actions and choices between alternative actions" (Walton 2002: 491): Should Bush invade Iraq (even if such a decision is illegal) simply because averting war would be an admission of failure or should he avert war because it is widely criticised and might have disastrous effect on the global community? Kagan seems to suggest that invasion is the right option from our point of view of self-interest (our private companies will gain more than "$50 billion" (Lando 2007: 259) in reconstruction contracts; our borders will be safer from further terrorist attacks, etc.). "Practical reasoning" (Walton 2002) dictates that the arguers should indulge in 'deliberation': Would the invasion remain ethical in terms of the moral, legal and deontological 'costs' for innocent Iraqi civilians? (Porpora and Nikolaev 2008: 171). The potential ecological and human cost of war for Iraqi civilians was muted because it "was not an American asset" (Chilton and Lakoff 1995: 48). Hence, if you look at Kagan's use of the sunk costs argument in the context of a 'dialogue' it might be a mere *slippery slope* argument, based on cost/benefit calculation. Kagan's argument can be represented as follows (Walton 2002: 488):

> If *a* stops trying to realize *A* now [if the U.S. decides to stop going to war with Iraq now], all *a*'s previous efforts to realize *A* [i.e., the U.S. deployment of its troops on Iraqi borders, huge public expenditure on preparations for war and private war contractors, etc.] will be wasted.
> If all *a*'s previous attempts to realize *A* are wasted, that would be a bad thing ["the consequences of backing down now would be horrific"].
> Therefore, *a* ought to continue trying to realize *A* [the U.S. should rush to war].

Fig. 8 Argument from waste

Kagan's 'argument from waste' is a poor substitute for 'rational discussion' in that prudential discourse should be displaced by a "moral discourse" that aims at "the accommodation of competing standards of justice in a way that satisfies the demand for *equity* (fairness) on all sides" (Crick and Joldersma 2007: 82). Differences of opinion should be resolved in a rational way by using proper argumentation schemes to identify, analyze and evaluate competing arguments and by drawing conclusions based on the premises put forward (Walton 2002: 500). It would be accurate to claim that Kagan has committed a sunk costs fallacy because

by arguing that the US has already deployed its military near the Iraqi borders and cannot afford to withdraw now, he fails to look to the future and ask whether it would be more reasonable and less costly for all involved parties to avert war at this point. Therefore, the soundness of an argumentation depends both on the use of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly and the specific content contained in the argument.

In the light of the comments stated above, the dialectical structure of 'argument from consequences' can be represented as follows (Walton 1996: 193):

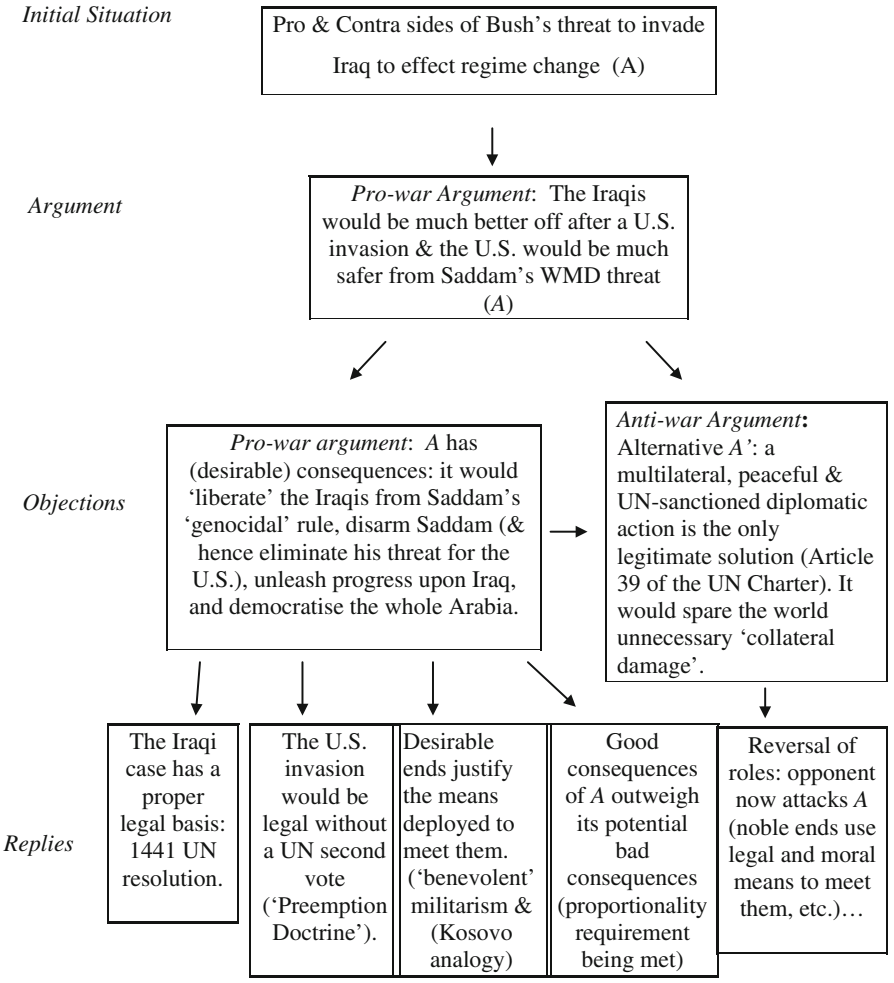

Fig. 9 Four-stage structure of the *argumentum ad consequentiam*

4 Conclusion

The US-British pro-war op/ed writers have "blinded" the public "from understanding anything except the media perspective" (Chermak 2003: 20) by uncritically assigning an unwarranted importance to certain events and modes of reasoning and, thus, bringing certain aspects of social reality to the forefront of the consciousness of the targeted readers (colonisation of public sphere). This made them as culpable as the US administration for garnering support for the Bush administration's neo-colonial project for a 'Greater Middle East' (performative geopolitical script). Pro-war argumentation intertextually resonated with Bush's 'war on terror' mantra (see Pfiffner 2004), with its 'preferred meanings', 'truth claims' and assumptions ('Bushspeak' storehouse), in a way that created a sort of "presupposed indexicality" (Hodge 2008: 5). The pro-war 'human rightist' topos was embedded in a neocolonial discourse that decivilised the Iraqi regime (*ad hominem* fallacy) through resort to Nazi analogy, which was "invested with strategic opportunity" (Jacobs 2002: 129). Pro-war 'moral discourse' was deployed not "as an end in itself but as a means to some ulterior end that is in the [US] actor's interest" (Porpora and Nikolaev 2008: 175). The 'framing' of the unfolding Iraq conflict as a clash of 'moral' values have initiated a fierce "struggle for hegemony of meanings and representations" (Chouliaraki 2000: 295). The use of "condensation symbols" (Zarefsky 2008: 324), such as 'freedom', 'benevolence' and 'national security' provided pro-war arguers with powerful manipulative tools. Besides, "repetition" has helped to create "momentum" (ibid.: 325). Pro-war debaters "employ[ed] the locus of the irreparable to create a sense of urgency" (Zarefsky 2008: 325) and to scare people into accepting war. The use of *consequentialist* reasoning to justify the US-led war on Iraq consolidated the role of the mainstream media as agenda-setting institutions.

By decontextualising the Iraqi conflict, structural features of economy, politics and society were reduced to mere caricature (Crawford 1996: 32–33). A war waged to promote financial gain by the US "weapondollar-petrodollar coalition" (Harris 2008: 39), has turned, "with the aid of propaganda," into "a crusade and into the last war of humanity" (Norris 2004: 268). The encroachment of the market upon political issues has ironically led to a "sinister lunacy of slaughter and military sacrifice" (Norris 2004: 268). The power of the media to influence sociopolitical agendas might undermine democratic deliberation in modern societies by allowing corporate/political elites to colonise the public sphere and advance their mercantile/ideological imperatives. This symbiotic relation between the Bush administration and the US/British mainstream media can be represented as follows (O' Tuathail 2002: 608):

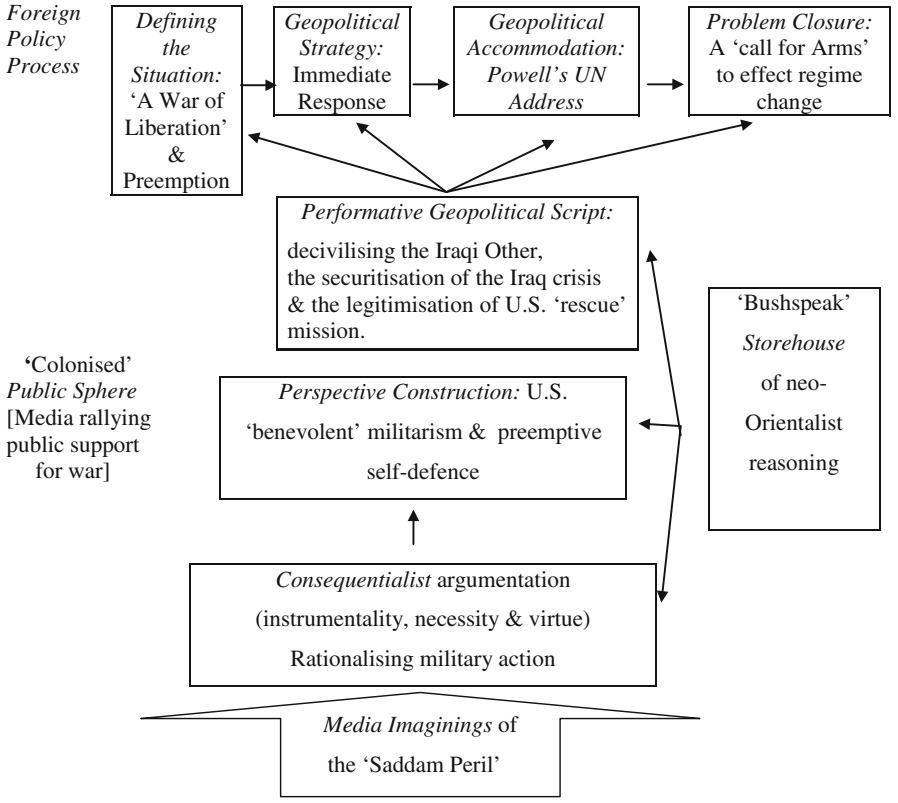

Fig. 10 Geopolitical reasoning in the US-British mainstream op/ed argumentation

Appendix

List of Opinion/Editorials

1. "Uncertain territory," *The Times* (London), March 11, Tuesday, Features; 21, 644 words.
2. "Oil, intimidation, rage -why we are really at war," *The Times* (London), March 20, 2003, Thursday, Features; 20, 1407 words, Anatole Kaletsky.
3. "Boys with big, loaded toys…I know what that's about," *The Times* (London), March 19, 2003, Wednesday, *Features*; 22, 613 words, Melissa Kite.
4. "Le Bulldozer takes up tap dancing and learns to love himself," *The Times* (London), March 15, 2003, Saturday, Features; 26, 1012 words, Ben Macintyre.
5. "Clare Short, ally of the 'post-heroic strategists'", *The Times* (London), March 5, 2003, Wednesday, Features; 20, 1414 words, Simon Jenkins.

6. "Honesty is the first casualty of the War of Short's Ego," *The Times* (London), March 13, 2003, Thursday, Features; 22, 625 words, Mick Hume.
7. "Uncertain territory," *The Times* (London), March 11, 2003, Tuesday, Features; 21, 644 words.
8. "Law, and conscience, demand we go to war," *The Times* (London), March 3, 2003, Monday, Features; 18, 1423 words, William Rees-Mogg.
9. "Bush: a policeman with the law on his side," *The Times* (London), March 17, 2003, Monday, Features; 18, 1424 words, William Rees-Mogg.
10. "Comment & Analysis: Too much of a good thing: Underlying the US drive to war is a thirst to open up new opportunities for surplus capital," *The Guardian* (London), February 18, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 17, 1232 words, George Monbiot.
11. "Comment & Analysis: A wilful blindness: Why can't liberal interventionists see that Iraq is part of a bid to cement US global power?," *The Guardian* (London), March 11, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 21, 1200 words, George Monbiot.
12. "Threat of war: Wimps, weasels and monkeys—the US media view of perfidious France: Dissenters in Europe become the first victims—of a war of words," *The Guardian* (London), February 11, 2003, Home Pages, Pg. 3, 757 words, Gary Younge in New York and Jon Henley in Paris.
13. "Comment & Analysis: Why I had to leave the cabinet: This will be a war without support at home or agreement abroad," *The Guardian* (London), March 18, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 26, 831 words, Robin Cook.
14. "Comment & Letters: If we are going to intervene, there will have to be rules: Fetishising sovereignty is a dictators' charter, but Martini interventionism is no better," *The Guardian* (London), March 8, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 20, 1242 words, Jonathan Freedland.
15. "Comment & Analysis: Want to be a world leader? Learn the vital five steps: Blair, Bush and even Saddam are unwittingly giving a master class in how to govern," *The Guardian* (London), March 15, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 20, 1244 words, Jonathan Freedland.
16. "Comment & Analysis: Dilemmas of war: It is entirely consistent to be against this invasion—yet hope for a speedy victory in the interests of the Iraqis," *The Guardian* (London), March 19, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 23, 1157 words, Jonathon Freedland.
17. "Comment & Analysis: Trust Tony's judgment," *The Guardian* (London), March 18, 2003, Leader Pages, Pg. 25, 807 words, Bill Clinton.
18. "Threat of war: Paris: emollient words but no retreat on war: France insists on UN route as criticism reaches new intensity," *The Guardian* (London), March 14, 2003, Home Pages, Pg. 4, 826 words, Jon Henley in Paris and Patrick Wintour.
19. "The Calm Before," *The WP*, March 12, 2003 Wednesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A21, 783 words, Michael Kelly, Kuwait City.
20. "Why it's War, Dear Friend," *The WP*, February 9, 2003 Sunday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. B07, 734 words, Jim Hoagland.

21. "Thinking Parochially, Acting Selfishly," *The WP*, March 13, 2003 Thursday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A23, 813 words, Jim Hoagland.
22. "Hussein's Shame Strategy," *The WP*, March 20, 2003 Thursday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A29, 791 words, Jim Hoagland.
23. "Europe's Monomania," *The WP,* February 23, 2003 Sunday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. B07, 788 words, George F. Will.
24. "Permission from the Powerless," *The WP*, March 4, 2003 Tuesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A23, 751 words, George F. Will.
25. "Uncomfortable Silence," *The WP*, March 15, 2003 Saturday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A23, 860 words, Colbert I. King.
26. "Ignoring the Unthinkable," *The WP*, March 17, 2003 Monday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A19, 844 words, Fred Hiatt.
27. "When War is the Best Medicine," *The WP*, March 16, 2003 Sunday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. B07, 948 words, Bill Frist.
28. "Bush's Minimalist Mantra," *The WP*, March 11, 2003 Tuesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A23, 774 words, David S. Broder.
29. "Pearl Harbor 2003?," *The WP*, March 18, 2003 Tuesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A29, 1015 words, Frederick W. Kagan.
30. "The Case for Action," *The WP*, February 5, 2003 Wednesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A22, 1306 words.
31. "Are Inspections Working?" *The WP*, March 11, 2003 Tuesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A22, 736 words.
32. "Damage Control," *The WP*, March 16, 2003 Sunday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. B06, 700 words.
33. "A Question of Will", *The WP*, March 18, 2003 Tuesday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A28, 738 words.
34. "First Strike," *The WP*, March 20, 2003 Thursday, Final Edition, Editorial; Pg. A28, 571 words.
35. "D-Day," *The NYT*, March 19, 2003 Wednesday, Late Edition–Final, Section A; Column 5; Editorial Desk; Pg. 29, 750 words, By Thomas L. Friedman.
36. "The Gridlock Gang," *The NYT*, February 26, 2003 Wednesday, Late Edition-Final, Section A; Column 5; Editorial Desk; Pg. 25, 757 words, By Thomas L. Friedman.
37. "Give Freedom a Chance," *The NYT*, March 6, 2003 Thursday, Late Edition-Final, Section A; Column 1; Editorial Desk; Pg. 31, 682 words, By William Safire.
38. "President Bush Prepares for War," *The NYT*, March 17, 2003 Monday, Late Edition–Final, Section A; Column 1; Editorial Desk; Pg. 22, 464 words.
39. "Power and Leadership; The Real Meaning of Iraq," *The NYT*, February 23, 2003 Sunday, Late Edition–Final, Section 4; Column 1; Editorial Desk; Pg. 10, 1724 words.
40. "Today's War is Against Tomorrow's Iraq," *The NYT*, March 10, 2003 Monday, Late Edition–Final, Section A; Column 1; Editorial Desk; Pg. 19, 1034 words, By Philip Bobbitt.

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