

The Cost, Consequences and Morality of War in Iraq¹

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Introduction

On Saturday, 15 February, 2003, the largest protest march in British history took place in London. The march was organised by the Stop the War Coalition² as part of an international day of action which included anti-war marches in over 600 cities around the world. The Prime Minister's response to this enormous demonstration was delivered in a speech to a Labour party conference on the same day in which he argued that there was a moral case for war. This 'moral' case has subsequently been repeated on many occasions by both Tony Blair and George W Bush, particularly once it became apparent that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. This paper briefly examines this dubious justification for the war.

The largest march in British history

The huge size of the February 2003 anti-war march was a surprise to both the organisers and the police. However, the estimated number of people who participated in the London march is disputed. The Metropolitan Police estimated that 750,000 took part, whereas the Stop the War coalition estimated the number to be closer to two million³. Both the police and the organisers believe that this was the largest march in British history, making it bigger than the protest against the 'Poll Tax', the Countryside Alliance march, the Suez and Vietnam anti-war marches, the Suffragette marches, the Chartist and anti-slavery protests.

An independent estimate of the size of the march can be made from the answers to the ICM Omnibus Survey⁴ that was commissioned by the

¹ This paper is an update of an earlier published version which was written in February 2003 before beginning of the war in Iraq. See, Gordon, D (2003) Iraq, War and Morality. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XXXVIII Nos 12 and 13, 1117-1120.

² <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/>

³ Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2765041.stm>

⁴ The ICM Daily Omnibus Survey is a telephone survey of 500 people per day which used random number dialling and a quota sample to achieve a nationally representative survey after weighting. Quotas are set on age, sex, standard geographical regions and housing tenure. Eight attempts are made to contact each respondent at different times over an eight day period.

Guardian newspaper and held over the weekend of the 14 to 16 February. Table 1 below shows the percentage of respondents whose household members participated (or intended to participate) in the London anti-war march, broken down by socio-demographic variables (Sex, Age, Social Class, Region and Voting Intention). Out of a sample of 1,003 respondents, 6% answered 'yes'. If we assume that all respondents answered truthfully and that only one person in these households went to the London march, then approximately 1.4 million people would have participated. The 2001 Census found that there were 23.85 million households with residents in Britain and 6% of 23.85 million is approximately 1.4 million. This estimate is half way between the estimates of the police and the anti-war march organisers.

Table 1: Q.6 Do you intend to/ did you or anyone in your household go on the anti-war march in London this weekend?

Variable	Category	Yes (%)
<i>Sex</i>	Male	6
	Female	6
<i>Age</i>	18-24	16
	25-34	7
	35-64	5
	65+	2
<i>Social Class (Social Grade)</i>	AB	8
	C1	8
	C2	4
	DE	4
<i>Region</i>	North	7
	Midlands	4
	South	6
<i>Voting Intentions</i>	Labour	6
	Conservative	3
	Liberal Democrat	7
	Other	19
TOTAL		6

Note: Sample size: 1,003 respondents

The most interesting feature of the demographic breakdown of the marchers from the ICM poll is that they included 16% of young people aged 18-24 and 19% of people whose voting intentions were 'other' i.e. not intending to vote for any of the main parties or not voting at all (see Table 1). These are the two population groups that are traditionally believed to be the most politically apathetic. The Government's views on war with Iraq may have succeeded in galvanising the politically dispossessed into political action. They may not be pleased with this achievement.

Tony Blair's 'Moral Case for War' speech

On the same day as the march, the Prime Minister's delivered a speech⁵ to Labour's local government, women's and youth conference in Glasgow. He argued that:

"The moral case against war has a moral answer: it is the moral case for removing Saddam. It is not the reason we act. That must be according to the United Nations mandate on Weapons of Mass Destruction. But it is the reason, frankly, why if we do have to act, we should do so with a clear conscience.

Yes, there are consequences of war. If we remove Saddam by force, people will die and some will be innocent. And we must live with the consequences of our actions, even the unintended ones.

But there are also consequences of "stop the war".

If I took that advice, and did not insist on disarmament, yes, there would be no war. But there would still be Saddam. Many of the people marching will say they hate Saddam. But the consequences of taking their advice is that he stays in charge of Iraq, ruling the Iraqi people."

He further added:

"But I ask the marchers to understand this.

I do not seek unpopularity as a badge of honour. But sometimes it is the price of leadership. And the cost of conviction.

But as you watch your TV pictures of the march, ponder this:

If there are 500,000 on that march, that is still less than the number of people whose deaths Saddam has been responsible for.

If there are one million, that is still less than the number of people who died in the wars he started."

The legality of the war?

At dawn on Thursday, 20 March, 2003, US and British armed forces invaded Iraq and began a 'preventative war' for which they had neither a UN mandate nor the authorisation of any other international body. The UK and USA governments' 'legal' justification for launching a war against Iraq was largely based upon a number of claims about the imminent threat that Iraq posed to world peace. Under international law, there are only two circumstances in which war is permissible: in self-defence from an actual or imminent armed attack (UN Charter Article 51)⁶ or when the

⁵ <http://www.labour.org.uk/tbglasgow/>

⁶ UN Charter Article 51: *Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right*

Security Council has directed or authorised use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security (UN Charter Article 42)⁷.

Since the 'end' of the war, it has become clear that the intelligence these claims were based upon was wrong - as the governments of France, Germany and many opponents of the war had suspected. Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – let alone have these weapons ready to launch in 45 minutes. Nor had the Iraqis been involved in the 11 September 2001 destruction of the Twin Towers in New York, nor had they tried to acquire uranium from Africa⁸. Much of the 'intelligence' about Iraqi weapons capabilities was significantly and deliberately biased. In June 2003, Scott Ritter⁹ (the former chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq) revealed that, between 1991 and the outbreak of war in 2003, the UK Ministry of Defence ran a covert intelligence operation (Operation Rockingham) designed specifically to 'cherry-pick' information which pointed towards Iraq having a WMD stockpile that could be used imminently. Operation Rockingham deliberately ignored evidence which pointed towards the destruction of Iraqi weapons and instead used 'selective intelligence' from just a tiny pool of data to create a false and misleading picture that Iraqi was a direct threat to the West (Mackay, 2003). Michael Meacher (2003), the former Minister of the Environment, has confirmed the existence of Operation Rockingham by

of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

⁷ UN Charter Article 42: *Should the Security Council consider that measures [not involving the use of force] provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.*

⁸ Linda Rothstein (2003) The editor of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists described the US media's response to the weapons of mass destruction 'intelligence' as follows: *"The media had 18 months to ask hard questions about the Iraq-related sucker bait dangled in front of it—much of it "evidence" of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that failed the laugh test. But the more ridiculous the emperor's new claims (imaginary clothes being harder to palm off these days), the more the media strove to make whole-hearted swallowing of them a test of patriotism.*

Television coverage was unforgivable, both before and during the war. The White House correspondents appeared complicit in the President's highly scripted pre-war press conference. Print was bad, too, shilling for the government and asking few questions. The ultimate print moment may have belonged to Times reporter Judith Miller, whose pre-war source was the felonious Ahmad Chalabi. On April 21 Miller announced that an unnamed Iraqi scientist had three days earlier identified an unnamed site where, he said, Iraq had destroyed unnamed chemical and biological weapons before the war. She described this as the "most important discovery to date."

⁹ See also Ritter and Rivers Pitt (2002)

revealing that David Kelly¹⁰, while giving evidence to the Prime Minister's Intelligence and Security Committee in closed session on July 16 2003 - the day before his suicide - stated that "*Within the defence intelligence services I liaise with the Rockingham cell.*"

Some of the key government officials with responsibility for prosecuting the war in both the UK and USA have expressed doubts as to its legality. The Hutton Inquiry released an e-mail, sent on 17 September, 2002¹¹ from Jonathan Powell (Downing Street Chief of Staff) to John Scarlett (Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee) and copied to Alastair Campbell (Downing Street Director of Communications) concerning the dossier *Iraq's Weapons Of Mass Destruction The Assessment Of The British Government*. The e-mail argued that:

"First the document does nothing to demonstrate a threat, let alone an imminent threat from Saddam. In other words it shows he has the means but it does not demonstrate he has the motive to attack his neighbours let alone the west. We will need to make it clear in launching the document that we do not claim that we have evidence that he is an imminent threat."

More recently¹², Richard Perle - the former chair of the US Defence Policy Board, which advises the US Defence Secretary - argued that "*I think in this case international law stood in the way of doing the right thing.*" He said that "*international law ... would have required us to leave Saddam Hussein alone*", and this would have been morally unacceptable. French intransigence, he added, meant there had been "*no practical mechanism consistent with the rules of the UN for dealing with Saddam Hussein*". (Burkeman and Borger, 2003).

The only remaining justification¹³ for the Iraq war is the 'moral' case outlined in Tony Blair's speech. It rests on the assumption that the war caused fewer deaths and less suffering of ordinary Iraqi people than if Saddam Hussein had remained in power. This argument was flatly rejected by many when Tony Blair first articulated it on the grounds that

¹⁰ Dr David Kelly was senior adviser on biological warfare for the UN in Iraq between 1994 and 1999, and was subsequently appointed as scientific adviser to the UK proliferation and arms control secretariat. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize for his work with the UN weapons inspection team in Iraq between 1991 and 1998. His suicide on July 17th 2003 resulted in the establishment of the Hutton Inquiry.

¹¹ Hutton inquiry E-mail Powell/Scarlett 17/9/02 CAB/11/0069 http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/evidence/cab_11_0069.pdf

¹² Speech at The Institute of Contemporary Arts/Economist Debate. Is the War on Terror on Track? Tue 18 Nov 2003, The Old Vic, London.

¹³ Lord Goldsmith, the UK Attorney General and William Howard Taft IV the legal advisor to the US Department of State argue that the invasion of Iraq was legal (see Taft & Buchwald, 2003). Their arguments have been supported by one prominent academic (Greenwood, 2002). However, the deputy legal adviser of the Foreign Office resigned in disgust at this legal reasoning and there is a substantial body of legal opinion that the 2003 war in Iraq was an illegal violation of the UN Charter (see Franck, 2003 for discussion).

it is wrong to engage in a mass 'mercy' killing of a few innocent people in order to save the many. However, the purpose of this paper is to look at the evidence for this 'moral' case for war by examining how many have already died as both a direct result of the 2003 war and the consequences of its aftermath (the 'unintended consequences' referred to by Tony Blair in his speech – see above), as well as how many people died in the 1991 Gulf War and as a result of UN sanctions.

The direct effects of the 1991 Gulf War

In early August 1990, the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait. On 6 August 1990, the United Nations Security Council imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait four days earlier and a military build-up began that eventually resulted in the six week Gulf War in early 1991. The air campaign against Iraq was launched 16 January 1991, with a ground force invasion of Kuwait a month later on the 24 February 1991. A ceasefire was called after four days on 28 February. Military forces from a coalition of 34 countries were involved in the war against Iraq.

The number of coalition military personnel that were killed is well documented¹⁴ - 358 men and women died - most of whom were from the USA and many as a result of 'friendly fire'. However, the number of people in Iraq directly killed by the war is much harder to establish and many of the estimates appear to be little more than exercises in propaganda.

The most widely quoted figures were those produced by the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) who estimated that 100,000 Iraqis were killed (plus or minus 50,000). By contrast, Heidenrich (1993) argues that this is a huge overestimate and that the Iraqi dead were only about 1,500. Both these estimates are based on a number of dubious assumptions and seem to be little more than guesses. A more 'scientific' analysis by Daponte (1993)¹⁵, based on epidemiological and demographic techniques, concluded that 56,000 soldiers (plus or minus 7,000) and 3,500 civilians were killed directly by the war.

The indirect effect of the Gulf War and economic sanctions

The heavy bombing of Iraq resulted in severe damage to infrastructure -- bridges, roads, water, sewerage and electrical power systems. Most of the deaths of 'innocent' people in Iraq were a result of the indirect effects of the bombing of these infrastructure facilities and an inability to repair these facilities due to the economic sanctions. These infrastructure

¹⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/gulf.war/facts/gulfwar/>

¹⁵ <http://www.ipnw.org/MGS/PSRQV3N2Daponte.html>

facilities were categorised as 'dual use targets' and deliberately targeted, often with precision munitions. An article in the US Air Force journal *Air & Space Power Chronicles* explains the legal (and moral?) basis for these bombing targets:

"A key example of such dual-use targeting was the destruction of Iraqi electrical power facilities in Desert Storm. While crippling Iraq's military command and control capability, destruction of these facilities shut down water purification and sewage treatment plants. As a result, epidemics of gastroenteritis, cholera, and typhoid broke out, leading to perhaps as many as 100,000 civilian deaths and a doubling of the infant mortality rate..."

. the US Air Force has a vested interest in attacking dual-use targets so long as dual-use target destruction serves the double role of destroying legitimate military capabilities and indirectly targeting civilian morale. So long as this remains within the letter if not the spirit of the law"
(Rizer, 2001)¹⁶

It is estimated that, as a result of the war and sanctions, Iraq's GDP fell by nearly two thirds in 1991, due to an 85% decline in oil production. Per capita income fell from \$3,416 to \$1,500 in 1991 and has since decreased to less than \$1,036 (and has been estimated to be as low as \$450 in 1995). Meanwhile, average shop prices for essential commodities stood at 850 times the July 1990 level (Select Committee on International Development, 2000). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field office in Iraq summarised the situation simply, *"the country has experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty"* (UN Security Council, 1999).

It is well established that mass poverty causes increased ill health and an increased risk of death and it is these indirect and unintended consequences of the Gulf War and economic sanctions that have caused the greatest amount of death and suffering amongst the ordinary people of Iraq.

The first assessment of the number of innocent people killed indirectly by the war was made two months after it ended by a study team from the Harvard School of Public Health. They found that destruction of the electricity and water distribution infrastructure had resulted epidemics of cholera, typhoid fever and gastroenteritis, particularly among children.

¹⁶ www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/Rizer.html

Mortality rates doubled or tripled among children admitted to hospitals in Baghdad and Basra (Harvard Study Team, 1991).

In Autumn 1991, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) carried out a more comprehensive study which found that the child mortality rate was more than three times higher than it had been in 1986. They estimated that there were approximately 46,900 excess deaths among children under five years of age during the first eight months of 1991. The deaths resulted from infectious diseases, the decreased quality and availability of food and water and an impoverished health care system which lacked drugs and supplies (Ascherio *et al*, 1992; Eisenberg, 1997).

In 1995, the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation conducted a community survey of the nutritional status and mortality among children under the age of five in Baghdad which found that the death rate had increased fivefold since the war ended in 1991. It concluded that “*The moral, financial, and political standing of an international community intent on maintaining economic sanctions is challenged by the estimate that since August, 1990, 567000 children in Iraq have died as a consequence.*” (Zaidi and Fawzi, 1995; Court, 1995).

The most reliable estimates of the numbers of children who have died as an indirect consequence of war and economic sanctions comes from the 1999 Iraq Child and Maternal Mortality Surveys¹⁷, carried out under the auspices of UNICEF (Ali, and Shahb, 2000). This was a large survey of 40,000 households¹⁸ which concluded that “*If the substantial reduction in child mortality throughout Iraq during the 1980s had continued through the 1990s, there would have been **half a million** fewer deaths of children under-five in the country as a whole during the eight year period 1991 to 1998*” (UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, 12 August 1999)¹⁹.

Table 2 (overleaf) shows how child and infant mortality rates changed in Iraq between 1960 and 1998, using the best available data (Ali, and Shahb, 2000). Child death rates in 1998 were two and a half times higher than they were before the Gulf War in 1990.

¹⁷ <http://www.unicef.org/reseval/iraqr.html>

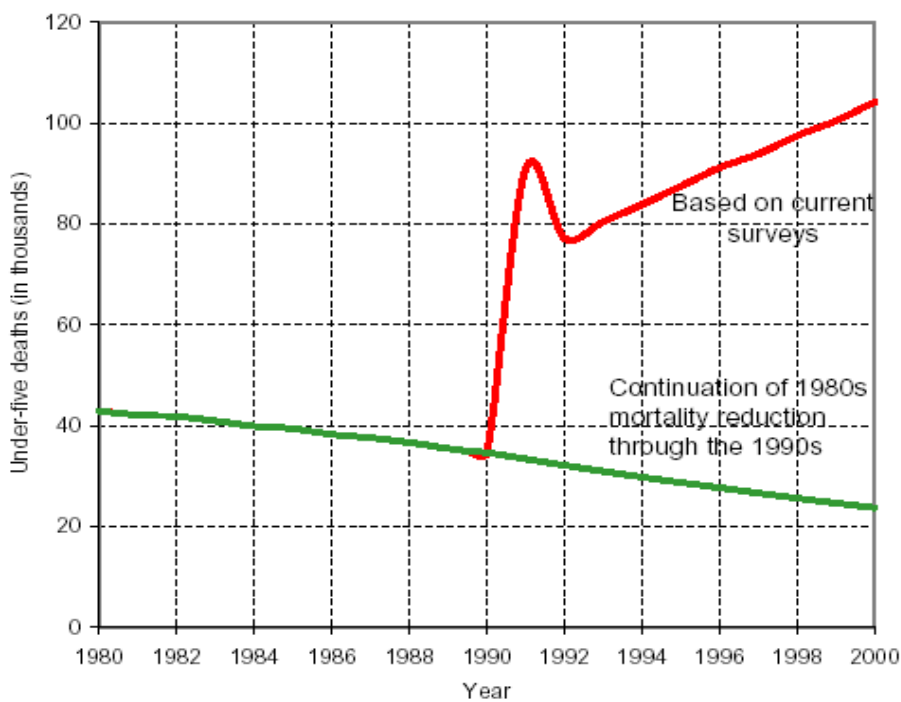
¹⁸ A stratified random sample of 23,920 household (response rate 99.7%) in Southern and Central Iraq and 15,694 households in Northern Iraq (response rate 96.6%).

¹⁹ (<http://www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm>)

Table 2: Child and Infant Mortality Rates²⁰ in Iraq, 1960 to 1998

Year	Under 5 Mortality Rate	Infant Mortality Rate (Under 1)
1960	171	117
1970	127	90
1980	83	63
1990	50	40
1995	117	98
1998	125	103

Iraq - disparities in under-five deaths



The chart shows the large disparity between under-five deaths based on recent surveys and the number of deaths if the mortality trend in the 1980s had been continued through the 1990s. Births taken from the UN Population Division, World Population Prospects, 1998 revision

The graph above illustrates how the estimate of half a million extra deaths of young children was calculated by the UNICEF research team (Ali, Blacker and Jones, 2003). On average, 170 young children died in Iraq each day between 1991 and 1998, whom may otherwise have lived, had it not been for the ‘unintended’ consequences of the war and economic sanctions.

²⁰ Death rates per thousand.

In 1999, the UN Security Council published a report it had commissioned on the humanitarian situation in Iraq²¹. Some of the findings are summarised below:

- **Infrastructure:** *"In addition to the scarcity of resources, malnutrition problems also seem to stem from the massive deterioration in basic infrastructure, in particular in the water-supply and waste disposal systems. The most vulnerable groups have been the hardest hit, especially children under five years of age who are being exposed to unhygienic conditions, particularly in urban centers. The WFP estimates that access to potable water is currently 50% of the 1990 level in urban areas and only 33% in rural areas."*
- **Education:** *"School enrolment for all ages (6-23) has declined to 53%." According to a field survey conducted in 1993, as quoted by UNESCO, in Central and Southern governorates 83% of school buildings needed rehabilitation, with 8,613 out of 10,334 schools having suffered serious damage. The same source indicated that some schools with a planned capacity of 700 pupils actually have 4,500 enrolled in them. Substantive progress in reducing adult and female illiteracy has ceased and regressed to mid-1980 levels, according to UNICEF.*
- **Health facilities:** *"Since 1991, hospitals and health centers have remained without repair and maintenance. The functional capacity of the health care system has degraded further by shortages of water and power supply, lack of transportation and the collapse of the telecommunications system. Communicable diseases, such as water borne diseases and malaria, which had been under control, came back as an epidemic in 1993 and have now become part of the endemic pattern of the precarious health situation, according to WHO."*
- **Society:** *On "the cumulative effects of sustained deprivation on the psycho-social cohesion of the Iraqi population [...] the following aspects were frequently mentioned: increase in juvenile delinquency, begging and prostitution, anxiety about the future and lack of motivation, a rising sense of isolation bred by absence of contact with the outside world, the development of a parallel economy replete with profiteering and criminality, cultural and scientific impoverishment, disruption of family life. [...] UNICEF spoke of a whole generation of Iraqis who are growing up disconnected from the rest of the world."*

²¹ (<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/background/reportsindex.html>)

- **Mental health:** The World Health Organization "*points out that the number of mental health patients attending health facilities rose by 157% from 1990 to 1998 (from 197,000 to 507,000 persons).*"

The report concluded that "*The gravity of the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people is indisputable and cannot be overstated*" (Security Council, 1999). The death and suffering of the Iraqi people was a direct result of the combined effects of the destruction of war and the economic sanctions which prevented the repair of the damaged infrastructure on which modern societies depend for survival. It is clear that, prior to the 2003 war, the Iraqi population had already endured a huge amount of suffering and it was also clear that another war would make their situation worse. The next section looks at what direct and indirect damage the 2003 war has done so far.

Tony Blair and the UK Government blame Saddam Hussein for the consequences of the economic sanctions which were designed to ensure Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions. The economic sanctions did not succeed in gaining this compliance but they did result in the premature deaths of many young Iraqi children and considerable suffering. These are some of the 'unintended consequences' of the UK Government's actions that Tony Blair referred to in his speech and he must 'live with' as part of his moral case for war (see above).

The direct effects of the 2003 Iraq War

The Iraq war (Codenamed Operation Iraqi Freedom) was mercifully brief, in part due to the effective disarmament of Iraq by UN weapons inspectors (UNSCOM) prior to the war. A US and UK force invaded on the 20 March 2003 and had gained control of most of Iraq by 16 April 2003 (Taylor and Youngs, 2003). In total, 466,985 military personnel were deployed (Moseley, 2003), including 46,000 from the UK (MoD, 2003). By 30 April, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, was able to announce that "*the conditions now allow for the return of a further 3,500 personnel to the UK*"²² On 1 May, President Bush addressed the US nation and said that "*Major combat operations in Iraq have ended.*"

Despite this rapid 'conventional' military victory, at the time of writing (November 2003), a guerrilla war is continuing in Iraq with numerous attacks on US and UK troops as well as on civilians. The numbers of deaths and injuries discussed below are therefore likely to continue to increase until there is a political solution in Iraq. These are some of the few facts about the war that are not contested. The extremely dangerous situation in Iraq has resulted in what Medact (the UK based international

²² House of Common Debates 30 April 2003, c15-16WS

medical charity) has described as an ‘information black hole’ and there has been virtually no rigorous scientific analysis on the extent and nature of the damage inflicted by the war (Farooq *et al*, 2003). Therefore, all the results discussed below must be treated with considerable caution.

By November 2003, there had been over 500 military fatalities amongst ‘coalition’ forces (433 US, 53 UK and 25 ‘Other’) and over 2,400 men and women had been wounded.²³ However, the number of wounded is disputed and Buncombe(2003) has claimed that *“there is a huge number of severely wounded soldiers whose injuries and fate go largely unreported...The first stopping-off point for almost all injured soldiers evacuated from Iraq is the US Regional Medical Centre in Landstuhl, Germany, about 100 miles south-west of Frankfurt. To date they have treated a total of 7,714 ill and injured troops. Of these, the Pentagon says 937 had suffered so-called combat injuries, as opposed to non-hostile injuries, though these numbers are disputed by independent experts.”*

Information about the numbers of Iraqi troops and civilians killed and injured during the war is even less precise. Conetta (2003) estimated that between 10,800 and 15,100 Iraqis were killed during the six weeks of war between 19 March and 30 April 2003. Of these, between 3,200 and 4,300 were non-combatants - that is civilians who did not take up arms. Expressed in terms of their mid-points, the estimates are:

Total Iraqi fatalities	12,950 (plus or minus 2,150)
Iraqi non-combatant fatalities	3,750 (plus or minus 550)
Iraqi combatant fatalities	9,200 (plus or minus 1,600)

Approximately 30% of the war's fatalities were non-combatant civilians. These estimates are based upon a detailed analysis of journalistic surveys of hospital and burial society records in Iraq, media reports of fatalities and observations and estimates of fatalities in combat by military commanders (Murphy and Conetta, 2003).

Using a similar methodology (but a longer time horizon – January to November 2003) the independent Iraq Body Count Project²⁴ estimated that between 7,900 and 9,700 Iraqi civilians had been killed as a direct result of US-led military actions. Their casualty figures are based upon a survey of 38 online media agencies (Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, Al Jazeera network, BBC, etc) and eyewitness accounts. Where these sources report differing figures, the range (a minimum and a

²³ Iraq coalition casualty count <http://lunaville.org/warcasualties/Summary.aspx>

²⁴ Iraq Body Count Project <http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

maximum) are given. The methodology builds upon the work of Professor Marc Herold who has produced estimates of civilian deaths in the war in Afghanistan²⁵.

Information on the numbers of civilians injured during the war is even less reliable. Dardagan, Sloboda and Williams (2003) estimated that approximately 22,000 non-combatants had been injured as a direct result of US-led military operations based upon an analysis of 300 media reports (up to 6 July 2003). Of these reported injuries, 8,000 were in the Baghdad area alone, suggesting that the full, countrywide picture, has yet to emerge. Military actions appear to have resulted in an injury to fatality ration of three to one (i.e. three civilians injured for every civilian killed). If a similar ratio holds true for Iraqi troops, then there would have been approximately 27,000 wounded. Therefore, analysis of media reports and similar sources indicates that US-led military actions since January 2003 have resulted in 18,000 dead and 50,000 wounded.

Medact has stressed that the number of Iraqi military deaths is unknown, with estimates ranging between 13,500 - 45,000 (Farooq *et al*, 2003). This is based on extrapolating from death rates of between 3-10% found in the units around Baghdad, although it is believed the overall casualty rate may lie closer to the lower figure (Steele, 2003). The US military estimates 2,320 Iraqi military deaths from fighting in and around Baghdad alone, however these figures are 'unofficial' as General Tommy Franks (head of US Central Command) has stated that "*We don't do body counts*" (Steele, 2003).

The indirect effect of the Iraq War and the continued violence

Indirect consequences of war can often be longer lasting and more lethal than the direct effects. This was certainly the case with the 1991 Gulf War. The damage to basic infrastructure (water, electricity, sewerage, transport, education and health systems) can be as deadly as any bullet. Similarly, the mass poverty that war usually causes (by destroying jobs and livelihoods) also results in ill health, disease and increased death rates.

The most vulnerable groups are young children (under fives) and the elderly. Most of the estimate of 10-11 million deaths of young children in the world each year are the result of just a few causes. Neonatal disorders (birth asphyxia, infections, prematurity and tetanus), diarrhoea, respiratory disease (particularly Pneumonia) and Malaria account for 85% of deaths. Malnutrition was a contributing factor in approximately half of the deaths of young children in 2000 (Black, Morris

²⁵ A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwhero/d/>

and Bryce, 2003). Operation Iraqi Freedom resulted in living conditions which inevitably caused malnutrition to rise and presumably child mortality to also increase (although there is no data on mortality available at present).

Table 3: Malnourished children under 5 in Iraq, 1991-2003²⁶, (%)

Malnutrition	1991	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2002	2003
Wasting	3	11	8.9	9.1	9.3	7.8	4	6.6-7.7
Underweight	9.2	23.4	24.7	22.8	21.3	15.9	9.4	10.3-14.3

Table 3 shows that malnutrition rates for young children increased dramatically after the 1991 Gulf War. Acute malnutrition (wasting – low weight for height²⁷) rose from 3% in 1991 to 11% in 1996 and remained very high until the Millennium, when prevalence rates began to fall with improved socio-economic conditions. Underweight (low weight for age²⁸) prevalence rates also show a similar pattern. It is not accurately known how malnutrition rates have changed in the aftermath of the war as the situation in Iraq remains much too dangerous to conduct a nationally representative survey. However, a very brave UNICEF team undertook a rapid nutrition survey in Baghdad in May 2003 (two months after the war began) and found that acute malnutrition rates had almost doubled, from 4% in 2002 to 7.7% in 2003 (UNICEF, 2003).

Between 5 June and 14 July 2003, a joint UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP) team undertook a similar household survey. Thirty clusters were selected, according to the population proportionate to size (PPS) method in Shatt Al Arab, Baghdad and Kerbala. Some 450 randomly selected households were targeted (15 households in each cluster) for anthropometric measurements for children under five and adults and for information on infant feeding and illness. This survey gave similar results to the UNICEF work, with acute malnutrition rates in Shatt Al Arab of 6.6% and in Kerbala of 6.7% (FAO, 2003). The final column in Table 3 shows the range of results from the

²⁶ Sources: 1991 Harvard Team Survey; 1996 and 2000 UNICEF MIC Survey; 1997-99 Health Facility Survey; 2003 UNICEF & FAO Rapid Nutrition Surveys.

²⁷ *Wasting* is an indicator of body mass and is used to assess acute (current) under-nutrition or recent weight loss, which can result either from low food intake and/or repeated infection.

²⁸ *Underweight* is used as a composite measure of wasting and stunting and is associated both with a lack of food and infection (e.g. weight loss from repeated bouts of diarrhoea). It reflects both chronic and acute under-nutrition for a given age but cannot distinguish between the two - i.e. an 'underweight' child could be tall and thin (wasted) or short and fat (stunted) but will be necessarily malnourished. It is the measure currently used by WHO and UNICEF to estimate the prevalence of child malnutrition in developing countries (Gordon *et al*, 2003).

UNICEF and FAO surveys. The increase in child malnutrition will inevitably result in more infant deaths in Iraq in 2003 than in 2002.

The UNICEF representative in Iraq, Carel de Rooy, reported in July 2003 that *“disease and unexploded ammunition could kill thousands of Iraqi children unless immediate priority is given to their protection...The whole country is littered with instruments of war, even the schools...We are now engaged in a campaign to prevent people, children especially, from touching munitions. Munitions look attractive in their yellowish or silvery colours, so the children pick them up.”*

However, the threat of disease was much worse. Carel de Rooy reported *“Many more children are dying of diarrhoea. Those silent deaths are much, much worse, and they do not attract much media attention. Between May 17 and June 4 the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported 1,549 cases of acute water diarrhoea in Basra city. A large number of them are children. The newly born are most threatened by disease. None of the approximately 210,000 children born in Iraq in the past three months has been vaccinated against any of the diseases they are vulnerable to. About 4.2 million children below five are now considered vulnerable to preventable diseases such as polio, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, measles and tuberculosis.”*

Iraq lost all its vaccine stocks when the Vaccine and Serum Institute of Baghdad was hit by missiles, and electricity to the store room was cut. With the fall of Saddam came the breakdown of much of Iraq's health system. The Ministry of Health stopped functioning, communication between the capital and the governorates snapped, and vital services like routine immunisation collapsed. Only 60 percent of the primary health care centres survived.” (Grassi, 2003)

A joint UN health needs assessment, conducted in August 2003, found that *“post-war looting and instability had severely impacted upon the health sector. There have been persistent disruptions of electric power, water supply and sewage, widespread insecurity and a partial paralysis of financial, managerial, logistic and administrative systems. These systems were weak prior to 2003 and need to undergo fundamental rebuilding... Already weak clinical laboratories and food inspection systems were paralysed after the 2003 war. Facilities for food safety need to be re-established, with new procedures and responsibilities put in place following dialogue and agreement between the different concerned sector ministries. Poor sanitation and shortage of safe water supply increase the risk of faeco-oral infections. Lack of proper and efficient system of disposal of chemical and toxic effluents from factories have resulted in contamination of air, soil, water and plants with all the*

hazards of respiratory tract infections, cancer and chronic and acute chemical intoxication.” (Nabarro, 2003).

In October, the World Health Organisation reported that damage to Iraqi health facilities had been considerable. During and immediately after the conflict, some 12% of hospitals were partially damaged and 7% were looted. More than 30% of the facilities that provided family planning services were destroyed. The country's two major public health laboratories, in Baghdad and in Basra, were destroyed. Health departments, hospitals, and Primary Health Centres lost vital equipment, refrigerators, furniture and air conditioners and four out of seven central warehouses were partially looted.²⁹

Also in October, the United Nations and the World Bank published a needs assessment for Iraq which reported that “Most Iraqis today have limited or no access to essential basic services or must rely on costly alternatives for electricity and water services. Billing systems and associated revenues that maintained operations have collapsed and need to be reinstated as a critical priority. Serious environmental and health risks associated with contaminated water supplies, inappropriate handling of solid waste, and disposal of sewage threaten to further burden the already severely stressed health system. Moreover, the lack of basic infrastructure services, particularly electricity, has added to the general lack of security in various parts of the country...

The sanitation system is becoming a serious environmental and health concern. According to current reports, none of the sewage treatment plants are operational, and raw sewage is being discharged into rivers and waterways.

Throughout most of the infrastructure subsectors, the initial goal is to restore services to levels that existed prior to March 2003.” (UN, 2003). There is, unfortunately, little indication in the report on how long the UN believes it will take before the ‘critical’ infrastructure billing systems are restored nor when basic services will be restored to March 2003 levels.

Conclusion

Operation Iraqi Freedom did indeed result in a lot of ‘freedom’ in Iraq during the summer of 2003. There was no Saddam Hussein but also no taxes, no customs, no police, no army, no border controls, no electricity, little fuel or basic services available. There was however a great deal of poverty, fear and terror. There was little legal justification for the war and no weapons of mass destruction have been found, yet Tony Blair has

²⁹ WHO Press release 23/10/03

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2003/pr80/en/>

repeatedly claimed that the war was still justified as the moral case for removing ‘Saddam’ from power was overwhelming.

Tony Blair argued that *“If we remove Saddam by force, people will die and some will be innocent. And we must live with the consequences of our actions, even the unintended ones.”* His moral case for war was premised on the utilitarian assumption that fewer would suffer or die if war occurred than if Saddam Hussein was left in power. However, the evidence of the consequences of the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent UN sanctions indicated that in excess of half a million innocent young children died and mass poverty and suffering befell the Iraqi population.

The morality of the economic sanctions which Tony Blair fully supported were even called into question by the UK House of Commons Select Committee on International Development which considered the sanction regime to be *“unprecedented in terms of longevity and its comprehensive nature”*. The committee concluded³⁰ *“The current debate on the future of sanctions is a welcome product of the renewed international commitment to the political, economic and social rights of the poor. We are convinced that these rights are infringed by the blunt instrument of comprehensive economic sanctions... The United Kingdom must take a lead by putting in place a system which can target and monitor sanctions effectively, instead of the present, somewhat casual approach.”* (Select Committee on International Development, 2000).

Given this history, it was unsurprising that, prior to the war, both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Archbishops of England³¹ were unconvinced by the Prime Minister’s moral case. They issued a joint statement on 20 February 2003 which argued:

*“The events of recent days show that doubts still persist about the moral legitimacy as well as the unpredictable humanitarian consequences of a war with Iraq.”*³²

Both the Pope and almost all Muslim Clerics were also unconvinced of the ‘moral’ case prior to the 2003 war and remain unconvinced at the present time.

It seems highly likely, given the current vulnerability of the Iraqi population, that the direct and indirect effects of the 2003 war in Iraq

³⁰<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmintdev/67/6707.htm>

³¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor.

³² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2782509.stm>

will be the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent people, particularly young children (Al-Nouri, and Al-Rahim, 2003). There is already some evidence that between 13,500- 45,000 Iraqi troops and civilians may have been killed and 50,000 people wounded. The final casualty figures from the war are likely to be much greater. The Iraqi people no longer have to live under the rule of a cruel tyrant but they have won a pyrrhic victory, which has had a terrible price. The 'consequences' for Tony Blair are that he is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent men, women and children in Iraq.

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