
PART III

TWO INSTANTIATIONS: SHEFFIELD REFLECTIONS OF GLOBAL MOVEMENTS

CHAPTER SEVEN

A GIVEN UNITY: THE UK ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT, 2001-2003

“There may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.”⁵⁷³

1. INTRODUCTION

The anti-war movement was marked by massive international participation and an apparent unity of purpose built on a broad diversity of social, cultural and political backgrounds. The early history of the movement, a phase focused on contesting the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan, is described below as a process of network-building at both national and local levels. This process enabled the creation of a much bigger movement across the UK in the phase of contention that focused on the Third Gulf War.⁵⁷⁴ Throughout the chapter I intersperse discussion of events and trends at local, national and international levels. While the bulk of my analysis is the result of ethnographic fieldwork in a very specific, local setting, it is impossible to consider this separately from the broader movement. A series of international, national and regional events drawing many thousands of participants punctuated the local efforts to state the case against war. They offered a reason to mobilise and a timetable for action. The national demonstrations also offered to activists the knowledge that their locality was not alone. Comparing ‘scores’ (‘how many coaches from Birmingham?’, ‘how many from Manchester?’) positioned the local organisers within a national movement. It also gave an indication of the breadth of the movement in more than numerical terms (‘did you hear about the Edale coach? A village of wealthy, middle-aged people living in the countryside, and even they’re bringing a full coach.’).⁵⁷⁵ Understanding the local level of

⁵⁷³ Tyler, P.E., 2003, “Threats and Response: A New Power in the Streets” in *New York Times*, 17/02/2003.

⁵⁷⁴ I shall adopt the following conventions for discussing the various wars in which Iraq has been involved: the First Gulf War refers to that between Iran and Iraq in 1980-88; the Second Gulf War refers to that between Iraq and a US-led coalition following the invasion of Kuwait in 1990; and the Third Gulf War, around which the presently considered anti-war movement was mostly focused, was that between Iraq and a US-led coalition in 2003.

⁵⁷⁵ These are all commonly heard sentiments from multiple demonstrations; field notes, September 2002, February 2003.

action cannot, therefore, be drawn away from the development of the national movement. Like the activists involved, I take the scale of the national movement as an indication that broadly similar processes occurred in many other UK cities. This interpretation is supported by participation in national and international events focused on deliberation rather than protest.⁵⁷⁶

Utilising the orientational frames developed in the previous chapters enables my analysis of the anti-war movement to investigate the creation of unity out of diversity. Section three argues that there was indeed a great deal of unity on a number of simple propositions, and demonstrates the way in which these propositions were arrived at from within different perspectives. I will also argue that some of the most notable difficulties produced by political diversity were centred not on analysis of reasons for war but the strategy required for stopping it. Section four investigates prominent strategic debates occurring at both the national and local levels.

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE UK ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

From Afghanistan to Iraq

Over one million people marched in London on Saturday 15th February 2003, joining 10-12 million marching in between 300 and 600 towns and cities worldwide.⁵⁷⁷ This was the climax of participation in a movement that, as was explained in chapter two, was born immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 (9/11) and was built partially on pre-existing movements. However, the increase in size that created what will presently be referred to as the anti-war movement implies that for the vast majority of participants, involvement began at some point in late 2001 (protesting

⁵⁷⁶ For instance, debates at both ESF I in Florence and the National StWC Conference in London and appeared to mirror those taking place at the local level; field notes, November 2001; January 2003.

⁵⁷⁷ As always, estimate numbers of marchers are subject to massive variation; these are among the most common figures available from a variety of sources: Murray, A., & German, L., 2005, *Stop the War. The Story of Britain's Biggest Mass Movement*, (Bookmarks, London); Smith, J., 2004, "The World Social Forum and the challenges of global democracy" in *Global Networks* 4(4), p.413; Fisk, R., 2003, "A million march in London but, faced with disaster, the Arabs are like mice" in *The Independent*, 18th February 2003, Harris, P., 2003, "People Power Takes to the World's Streets" in *The Guardian* 16th February 2003. According to a Guardian/ICM poll, F15 drew individuals from 1.25 million households; cited in Doherty, B., Plows, A. & Wall, D., 2003, "The Preferred Way of Doing Things': The British Direct Action Movement" in *Parliamentary Affairs* 56, p. 684.

against the conflict in Afghanistan) or in mid-late 2002 (protesting against the impending Third Gulf War).⁵⁷⁸

While participation was much higher in opposing the war in Iraq than the war in Afghanistan, there are obvious and concrete continuities that suggest that, in the UK at least, we should view these as two phases of the same movement. Contrary to what is a pervasive misunderstanding among commentators and later participants alike, the UK Stop the War Coalition (StWC) defined itself in opposition to the war on terror and was focused more broadly, therefore, than either particular war.⁵⁷⁹ StWC remained the central national organisation throughout the period of study. The growth of key organisations at the local level should also be understood as an immediate response to the war on terror. The Sheffield Anti-War Coalition⁵⁸⁰ was formed on 6th October 2001; the coalition included “representatives from (among others) CND, Peace Forum, Sheffield Green Party, Sheffield Socialist Alliance, and the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.”⁵⁸¹ During that month anti-war groups formed in at least six localities within Sheffield’s borders, as well as four categorical groups (for university students, women, education workers and health workers). These were to number among the longest-running and most active groups in the area.

The UK campaign against war in Afghanistan included national demonstrations of about 20,000 participants in October and perhaps 50,000 in November 2001.⁵⁸² Local mobilisation sowed the organisational seeds for the later, larger events: “from the Afghanistan war to the Iraq war, we started an organisation, we started the local networks, we learned things, talked about things, and built up the momentum... the Afghan campaign helped build the later stages.”⁵⁸³ The organisational input initially came largely from people who were already politically active and had a variety of political goals. The first smaller local groups sprang up where there were key activists who were already politically engaged. Those political engagements came from across

⁵⁷⁸ While tens of thousands of protesters had marched in London in April it wasn’t until possible 400,000 joined the national march of 28th September 2002 that it became obvious that concerted local activism in the meantime had massively swelled the ranks of anti-war protests.

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004; see also the brief introduction to the anti-war movement in chapter two.

⁵⁸⁰ Later this was generally called Sheffield Against War (SAW), and later still the Sheffield Stop the War Coalition. I will refer to the group throughout as Sheffield Against War, or SAW.

⁵⁸¹ SAW Press Release, 8/10/01.

⁵⁸² The latter figure is particularly evasive, with the organisers estimating 100,000 and the police 15,000. John Vidal gives this some interesting consideration in *The Guardian*. (Vidal, in *The Guardian*, 22/11/01).

⁵⁸³ ‘Kara’, interview, December 2004; ‘Harriet’ offered an identical analysis of this period, interview, December 2004.

the spectrum of political ideas represented in Part II above, taking in committed Trotskyists, direct activists and members of the Green Party whose ideas appear to fit with the RL frame. Because many of the groups and individuals involved had also been active in the preceding anti-globalisation and social justice movements, this offers a solid indication of the political continuity that grounds my interpretation of these various movements as a coherent cycle of contention.⁵⁸⁴

Within three days of war in Afghanistan being declared ‘over’ a new threat emerged. The US wrote a letter to the UN Security Council outlining the fact that they may need to take further military action to pursue the goal of self-defence. While not explicit this was interpreted in some quarters to imply Iraq.⁵⁸⁵ The following January, George W. Bush’s state of the union address infamously included Iraq within the ‘axis of evil’. The address was widely interpreted as broadening the focus of the war on terrorism, and giving it a new basis in the attempt to control the proliferation of ‘weapons of mass destruction’.⁵⁸⁶ The idea that Iraq was being lined up as a potential military adversary in the very near future was touted.⁵⁸⁷ By the first national anti-war demonstration after the end of the Afghan war, on 3rd March 2002, those working in the anti-war movement saw it as an obvious fact: “Iraq is the next target. Plans are underway to attack another impoverished population. And one that has already been the victim of over 10 years of brutal sanctions, that have decimated the Iraqi people's standards of living, shortening life expectancy by over 20 years.”⁵⁸⁸

Between the liberation of Kabul and the March mobilisation in London the nature of the anti-war coalition had developed. For two months the focus of discussion was not the possibility of war in Iraq; in fact, while there were occasional posting of relevant information and rumours on the email discussion list, some saw it as highly unlikely: “obviously the linking of Afghanistan to 911 was fairly tenuous, but the linking Iraq to it was extremely tenuous.”⁵⁸⁹ For many activists within the movement that was a period of

⁵⁸⁴ This impression is also supported by quantitative work around the F15 demonstration; Sloboda, J., & Doherty, B., 2004, “The Human Face of Political Dissent. What we know about the anti-war marchers of February 2003.”, *Oxford Research Group Briefing Papers*; available at: <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefings/iraqprotest.htm>; last accessed: 14/10/05.

⁵⁸⁵ Whittaker, B., 2001, “Letter to UN alarms Arab states” in *The Guardian*, 10/10/01.

⁵⁸⁶ Harnden, T., 2002 “Bush readies US for struggle with the ‘axis of evil’: State of the Union” in *The Daily Telegraph*, 31/01/02.

⁵⁸⁷ Clark, J. and Mahnaimi, U., 2002, “Bush trains his military sights on the Iran-Iraq ‘axis of evil’ War on terrorism” in *The Sunday Times*, 03/02/02.

⁵⁸⁸ StWC Leaflet, February 2002.

⁵⁸⁹ ‘Kara’, interview, December 2004.

rest. Nevertheless, the creation of a network of people who had worked together, and the practicalities of communication, venues, funds, printing facilities, and so on had already been temporarily solved. When the threat to Iraq became obvious, these groups could reform with very little costs in time or money.⁵⁹⁰ Yet there was also a shift in focus, and a development in the depth of the positions taken by many in the anti-war movement.

Many of those who remained very active worked with the PSC within SAW and switched their focus to the Palestine-Israel conflict. Well-attended demonstrations were held locally and nationally in support of the Palestinian cause. The Israeli government, in supporting the war on terror, claimed added justification for military incursions into the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the focus of the anti-war coalition naturally followed. On the national level this helped to cement the relationship between the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain. On the local level the focus on Palestine won support from Arabic diasporas: “There was a tremendous almost uprising in solidarity with the Palestinians among the Yemenis here in Sheffield ... in some ways one of the best things that came out of the whole anti-war movement in Sheffield was the close working relationship we had with them, and they continued to be part of the much broader movement.”⁵⁹¹ The building of trust within this network, in addition to the obvious mobilisation resources that could be offered, led to a mutually reinforcing relationship between the Palestinian cause and network building among Arabic communities. However, the relative low visibility of the broader movement in this period resulted in surprise and confusion among both the mainstream media, and some sections of the anti-war movement at the closeness of the ties between the issues at the major international demonstrations.⁵⁹²

Towards 15th February and Day-X

Clearly, while there were some qualitative continuities the period before the Third Gulf War also saw a massive quantitative rise in participation. For some it was the manner of the prosecution of war in Afghanistan that led to deeper involvement in the second phase of the movement. ‘Orson’, for instance, who later became central to SAW, was initially ambivalent about the justice of the Afghanistan war:

⁵⁹⁰ ‘Harriet’, interview, December 2004.

⁵⁹¹ ‘Eldon’, interview, February 2005.

⁵⁹² For instance, at the F15 march one local peace activist was particularly angered by the chants of ‘Victory to the Intifada’ arguing that it was a source of confusion for people who were marching for peace, to find themselves aligned with people supporting a violent uprising; ‘Pete’, field notes, February 2003.

“When it came to Afghanistan I was unsure but still walked over to the demo, and there was ‘Bee’ speaking to the people and I was just one of the punters ... but I wasn’t decided ... with Afghanistan if they went in and they put loads of money in, like build this country up, and really put in the investment necessary and I thought well maybe that’s gonna be okay ... but it was all bullshit, there was a token effort to reconstruct but nothing beyond that, so when it came to Iraq I thought no way.”⁵⁹³

Myriad such justifications were offered, many more activists became involved and there was a blossoming of new local anti-war groups. The spring and summer of 2002 saw a crescendo of protest events appealing against plans for war in Iraq. Approximately 400,000 marching in London in September, with simultaneous protests in many cities in Europe and the US, appeared at the time to be an immense achievement.

With the quantitative shift came thousands more voices, from different backgrounds and various levels of prior political experience. The demonstrations against the Afghanistan war were already being reported as involving a diverse base of participants⁵⁹⁴ and as the scale increased so did the awareness of the diversity of both social and religious backgrounds and political views included. In terms of media impact this became an overriding theme. The precise political nature of such differences, and the challenges that it created within the movement, will be explored in detail throughout this chapter. However, a brief examination of the media impact of the major demonstrations, in particular those on 28th September 2002 and 15th February 2003 highlights the importance of the theme of diversity in the movement. An electronic search of five UK newspapers⁵⁹⁵ showed only one report of the September demonstration before the event, in *The Independent*. Newspapers were reporting the coming F15 demonstration as early as the 13th February, with *The Telegraph* including a comment titled ‘I’ll be seeing you at the march, Saturday’ explaining why *Telegraph* readers should be taking part. On the 15th itself, each of the newspapers I examined included reports. *The Times* included four articles on the demonstration and a map of the march route. Reports or comments directly addressing the September 28th march appeared in four papers on the Sunday and three on the Monday, with a total of approximately 5,500 words and just a few other articles addressed the arguments of the anti-war movement. The Sunday and Monday papers after F15 were awash with reports and analysis, and if we include articles that discussed the anti-war movement without

⁵⁹³ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁵⁹⁴ Stuart, J., 2001, “Peace Demonstration - London anti- war march attracts 15,000” in *The Independent*, 22/11/01.

⁵⁹⁵ There follows, briefly, the results of a simple media analysis, carried out using the NewsBank search facility, focusing on the following newspapers: *The Daily Mail*, *The Mail on Sunday*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Telegraph on Sunday*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*.

explicitly reporting the F15 events, between 13th - 18th February we find over 70,000 words written on the issues.

The twin themes that appeared predominant in reporting of the events were the diversity of the participants, and the moderation of the majority. *The Sunday Times* titled one of its reports 'Middle England Masses in London', while *The Mail on Sunday* claimed: "This was above all a demonstration for people who never go on demonstrations... Many were what used to be termed the silent majority - the middle class, often middle-aged men and women who have disdained active protest all their lives."⁵⁹⁶ This may be a somewhat inaccurate reflection, however, and there is some evidence to suggest that the greater phenomenon taking place was the 're-activation' of many individuals who had been involved in protest in previous decades.⁵⁹⁷ *The Observer* noticed the presence of the 'usual suspects':

"CND, Socialist Workers' Party, the anarchists. But even they looked shocked at the number of their fellow marchers: it is safe to say they had never experienced such a mass of humanity... There were nuns. Toddlers. Women barristers. The Eton George Orwell Society. Archaeologists Against War. Walthamstow Catholic Church, the Swaffham Women's Choir ... One group of SWP stalwarts were joined, for the first march in any of their histories, by their mothers."⁵⁹⁸

The quotation accurately reflects the mood among many of the marchers. Noting the groups represented was a common pastime during the hours of waiting and walking, and the phrase 'even my mum's here' became used as resounding proof of the breadth and diversity of the movement among participants. Much later, one long-term SWP member told me:

"my mother ... has never expressed a political idea in her life ... and she has been incredibly opposed to the attack on Iraq, and everything that has happened since. She came incredibly alive at the age of 78 and she was engaging me in political conversations ... And I was thinking, my mum's against this, of her own accord, that's amazing."⁵⁹⁹

Focusing on the moderate middle classes as evidence of diversity carries the assumption that many other groups were represented. The mobilisation of many thousands of British Muslims gave the events racial and cultural diversity. In addition, many direct activists were also drawn to the marches, despite the fact that their tactical emphases lay elsewhere. Tactical diversity could be a source of frustration. For instance, one local activist was hoping for action centred on the US embassy, but noted:

⁵⁹⁶ Collins, P. & Cook, F., 2003, "People of Britain vote for peace" in *The Mail on Sunday*, 16/02/03.

⁵⁹⁷ Sloboda, J., & Doherty, B., "The Human Face of Political Dissent..."; field notes, *passim*.

⁵⁹⁸ Ferguson, E., 2003, "The peace marches: One million. And still they came." in *The Observer*, 16/02/03.

⁵⁹⁹ 'Hardy', interview, December 2004.

“you’d have never have got away with it because you were surrounded by school teachers and people’s mums. You can imagine picking up a brick and being told, “Don’t you DARE throw that brick young man, put it down immediately!”.”⁶⁰⁰ More tellingly, flyers were frequently distributed arguing that the traditional demonstration was an ineffective method of making change, and inviting participation in more direct actions.⁶⁰¹ These had an effect on local planning and debate, and will be considered in detail in section four below.

The mainstream media focus on the large-scale London events had the effect of hiding many instances of direct action. There had been long running traditions of protest at US airbases since the late 1950s, and permanent peace camps had been a feature of the 1980s. At NSA Menwith Hill in Yorkshire for example, Yorkshire CND report that hundreds of people, mostly women, have been arrested for break-ins since the 1950s.⁶⁰² This kind of action accelerated as the war came closer and new groups were formed. Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors coalesced in September 2002 and began a series of events aimed at ‘inspecting’ the weapons within RAF Fairford. Protests varied in size from small groups to thousands. Similarly, Fairford Peacewatch began by watching and recording the arrival and departure of US military equipment at USAF Fairford.⁶⁰³ Nationally, a day of coordinated non-violent direct action was planned for 31st October 2002 and around the UK approximately 300 different actions were carried out.

Planning for ‘Day-X’, i.e. the first day of protest after the beginning of the ‘shock and awe’ bombing campaign, had declared ‘Stop the City, Stop the War’ indicating an intention for a similar day of urban direct action. On 18th March the government won a vote in parliament, despite a rebellion of 139 Labour MPs, so that no further UN backing would be needed to take part in an invasion of Iraq. War began within two days, and 20th March became Day-X. The actions that took place, in dozens of cities across the UK, were generally ‘spontaneous’ demonstrations, critical mass cycle rides, sit-downs on busy roads and, in some cities, occupations of public buildings. Perhaps

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Gavin’, field notes, February 2003.

⁶⁰¹ For example, Fashionably Late Collective, 2002, “Direct Action Can Stop this War”, distributed in London on 28/09/02.

⁶⁰² Yorkshire CND, undated, *Menwith Hill – The Campaign*. Available at: <http://cndyorks.gn.apc.org/mhs/>; last accessed: 15/04/05.

⁶⁰³ Fairford Peacewatch, undated, “Peacewatching”. Available on Fairford Peacewatch Website at: <http://www.fairfordpeacewatch.com/peacewatching.html>; last accessed: 15/04/05; Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors, undated, “Mission”, available on *Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors Website* at: <http://cynatech.co.uk/gwi/mission.htm>; last accessed: 15/04/05.

the most disruptive actions of Day-X were by the school students who walked out of school at lunch times, despite warnings of punishment. For some activists in the movement the most positive memory was, “noticing the school students, I was doing supply work at a school where there was a lot of student walk outs and so there were students I was teaching who I would see in town on the demonstrations. Those were the things that really impacted on me.”⁶⁰⁴ However, despite the celebratory remarks that cluttered email traffic for the following days, in retrospect, the day was a great disappointment to many. One said simply “I haven’t got a happy memory of that day at all”.⁶⁰⁵ F15 had been, perhaps, the model political demonstration, being well-organised, entirely without violence and achieving huge media impact. Day-X, on the other hand, was marred by a lack of detailed planning, ‘Orson’ noted that the result: “wasn’t particularly good direct action. And that was the problem because the direct action then was just blocking the roads ... it just served no purpose really.”⁶⁰⁶

At the time of writing, StWC continues to organise relatively high profile demonstrations. For example, a London demonstration held on 24th September 2005 drew thousands of protesters.⁶⁰⁷ Following Day X, however, was a gradual dissolution of the movement. Numbers involved at the large gatherings, and local activities such as demonstrations and public meetings remained high for many weeks. The dissemination of information about the situation in Iraq remained high for many months afterwards. The key indicator, however, is that the networks focused entirely on the war on terror stopped expanding and started to contract. In this most significant way, the beginning of the war marked the beginning of the decline of the anti-war movement.

Understanding the Anti-War Movement

In this brief history I have adumbrated the interplay of unity and diversity that the anti-war movement represented. At the most basic level there was an apparent unity of purpose around the slogan ‘Stop the War’. But the broad diversity of class, race and age in participation immediately raises the ‘why’ question so central to (particularly European) social movement studies. Research that asks why people take part, i.e. for what purpose and under what conditions of expectation, has led to an improved understanding of the heterogeneity of all social movements, as discussed in chapter

⁶⁰⁴ ‘Daniel’, interview, July 2004.

⁶⁰⁵ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁰⁶ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁰⁷ Organisers claimed ‘up to 100,000’ while *The Independent* suggested a more modest ‘more than 10,000’; StWC, 2005, “A Great Day” on *Stop War News*, available at: <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/>; last accessed: 01/10/05; Anderson, T., 2005, “Thousands march to demand withdrawal of troops from Iraq” in *The Independent on Sunday*, 25/09/05.

two. It is for this reason that this thesis has developed an analytical method for sensitising the researcher to the various answers offered to these questions from within the general movements. While the scale of the movement mitigates against understanding all of the perspectives from which activists justified their actions, it is my central claim that the three orientational frames I have identified offered a justificatory worldview utilised by significant sections of the movements.⁶⁰⁸ As I will demonstrate in the following sections, it is only through exploring the different sets of ideas used in justifying and comprehending campaign activity that we can understand the internal dynamics of a variegated movement. It allows us to understand the degree to which the movement was unified in a common purpose, and the degree to which activists' analyses diverged depending on political preconceptions.

Tactical diversity was at least as important as the diversity of worldviews in understanding the nature of the movement. This claim may be justified by two simple propositions. First, the movement was instantiated in a range of places and forms of action. Any account that focuses purely on the national marches is highly partial. Second, participants and bystanders are motivated not simply by what a movement 'says' but also by what it does. Had the focus been entirely on any one form of action some bystanders are likely to have dismissed the movement, seeing it as either ineffective, morally unacceptable or personally risky. Understanding the anti-war movement therefore requires an understanding of the dynamics that led to decisions to organise particular forms of action. In Part II I argued that each orientational frame, in addition to offering a framework for analysis of political processes are imbued with tactical advice. Repertoires of contention are deeply intertwined with the understanding of power, structure and agency offered by the frames. Precisely to the extent that significant sections of the anti-war movement were committed to the orientational frames I have identified these frames can be understood as partly determining the nature of the action by which the movement made its claims.

Finally, the story presented above is one wherein a movement exploded into action in the attempt to stop the Third Gulf War before it had begun. In this it is arguably

⁶⁰⁸ While my methodology does not allow me to measure significance quantitatively at the national level I will, through examining the particular instantiation of the movement in Sheffield, indicate significance in a qualitative sense. That is, activists working broadly within these frameworks were central to the networks and organisations responsible for mobilisation. Their convictions were particularly strong in motivating their own committed action. Importantly, it was their convictions that appeared in the movement literature that played a role in inspiring mass participation. Certainly, these are not the only considerations in explaining the quantitative success of the mobilisation. Neither can we read off the particular interpretations of activists from movement literature as these were often constructed in a negotiated process.

unique in social movement history.⁶⁰⁹ Where the momentum of protest against the invasion of Afghanistan had barely begun by the time of the liberation of Kabul, participation in the major phase of the anti-war movement had peaked before the invasion of Iraq had started. Popular explanations for the dwindling of the movement often refer to a feeling of hopelessness following the failure to actually stop the war, while some moved immediately into a celebration of how ‘we nearly stopped the war’.⁶¹⁰ However, had the movement rather seen a phase of renewed intensity an explanation based on anger at seeing its demands ignored would hold equal conviction. In the following I will argue that the diversity of analyses within the anti-war movement were obscured by a number of coping mechanisms that focused on the call for unity. When the beginning of the conflict altered the terrain of debate the complexity of the new situation raised divisions within the movement to the surface. To that extent the ideational dynamics within the movement offer a greater understanding of its reaction to the start of the war.

3. EXPLORING UNITY IN THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Fundamentals

"The attacks on New York and Washington were outrageous and barbaric, but the decision to bomb Afghanistan will lead to the deaths of thousands more innocent people and is equally tragic. What kind of message does the Government send to young people when it sanctions military aggression against a defenceless population on the brink of starvation?"⁶¹¹

This quotation epitomises the perspective on which the ideational unity of the first phase of the anti-war movement was dependent. Condemnation of the 9/11 attacks was widely perceived as a necessary precursor to critique: “in the early days we were always battling against the outrage at 9/11.”⁶¹² This is not to imply that this was a tactical sop to the prevailing zeitgeist. Compassion for the suffering of the victims of 9/11 was virtually always as genuine as that for the victims of an attack on Afghanistan no matter how strident the critique of the US. It was, therefore, the combination of an abhorrence for unnecessary suffering and a belief in the equality of all human beings that brought the initial movement together. Explicitly, many activists argued that it appeared, from the

⁶⁰⁹ Chomsky, N., 2002, “Chom’pin at the Bit, an Interview with Noam Chomsky” in *Schnews* 386, available at: <http://www.schnews.org.uk/archive/pdf/news386.pdf>; last accessed: 19/07/05.

⁶¹⁰ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶¹¹ SAW Press Release, 8/10/01.

⁶¹² ‘Kara’, interview, December 2004.

actions of the US, that one American life was worth much more than the life of anyone from a poor country.⁶¹³ At the same time gross inequalities of wealth between the US and Afghanistan, and the plight that Afghans already suffered due to poverty, hunger and cold was consistently highlighted. In-depth analysis of the three orientational frames identified in Part II demonstrated subtle differences in the understanding of equality. However, these only surface when the notion of equality is examined in the light of other ideational elements. For instance, the RS frame can justify different treatment of people on the basis of class and the DA frame on the basis of culpable action in the past. Any such claims are nevertheless dependent on the notion that, from the outset, all human beings are equal. The equality claims of the early phase of the anti-war movement, on the contrary, had such a foundational simplicity that it is hardly surprising that they were easily expressed from within any of the frames identified here. That this was the first and foremost mode of articulating opposition to the war underlines the importance with which the notion of human equality is held across different strands of the movement.

The next stage in critique was to question the motivations of the governments involved. Some recognised that this was a ‘gut reaction’: “I tend to think in a certain way, and that way of thinking is that governments are always there to be challenged, and having a distrust of America, and George Bush.”⁶¹⁴ This position was bolstered as it became apparent that plans for a war against the Taliban had been in place since well before September 2001.⁶¹⁵ Similar positions were held with respect to Iraq. Thus, the following was a common belief: “The Bush gang, and probably Blair, already had their sights on Iraq before 9/11 ... and 9/11 gave them the excuse, and they could say, we are under attack, we are going to defend ourselves.”⁶¹⁶ With a history of critique in engaging governments and businesses alike in relation to the process of economic globalization this, again, found easy articulation in the three orientational frames. For proponents of the RL frame, for instance, the drive for neoliberal, free-trade economics was located in Washington. The US is therefore understood as the worst offender in terms of the abuse of economic and political power for reasons of national self-interest. With a different angle, the RS frame understands the actions of the US as those of an imperialist nation; its elites exploiting the poor both at home and abroad. While this is a markedly different analysis the end result is the same: suspicion at the motives of the

⁶¹³ Field notes, December 2001.

⁶¹⁴ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶¹⁵ BBC (2001) “US planned attack on Taleban” on *BBC News*, 18/09/01. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1550366.stm; last accessed: 15/04/05.

⁶¹⁶ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

US government. In general terms we see the critique of power elites, understood in subtly different ways from each frame, converge on the notion that power acts to further its own interests.

Even at the very local level, this underlying political diversity was a feature of anti-war mobilisation from the beginning. The Socialist Alliance was central in bringing together SAW, and local groups included key activists from Trotskyist organisations, direct action groups, the Green Party and CND among others. Yet operating broadly within the frames identified, unity of purpose appeared as a given. The argument that a convergence of critique occurred therefore deserves closer examination. By identifying the motivations ascribed to US and UK governments, particularly in relation to the war on Iraq, we can see how the different frames each operated to cast the invasion as illegitimate.

Three Frames Compared

Within the RS frame the notion of imperialism takes a central role. As detailed in chapter three, the frame contains a class-oriented perspective that sees imperialist aggression as a natural result of the need for capitalism to expand. Imperialism is tied to the class analysis because it is seen as another form of exploitation of both resources and labour. ‘Eldon’ referenced Lenin to explain: “The essence of imperialism is exploitation, the idea that rich nations or elites within them somehow or other feeding off the living labour in those poor countries.”⁶¹⁷ Imperialism becomes an identification of the worst excesses of capitalism. A number of key claims are frequently marshalled by those working within the RS frame to define America in particular as imperial. First, the US is understood as the primary symbol of advanced capitalism. Second, the list of over twenty nations bombed by the US since the end of the Second World War, often presented on the backs of tee-shirts like the tour dates of a rock band, defines US belligerence. Third, US spending on arms far outstrips that of any other country, or indeed, any other combination of non-allied countries.

Of course, such information is chiefly presented to bystanders in order to make the case against war. For those working within the RS frame the appropriate understanding is already present. At whatever moment in the post WWII era that an activist had aligned themselves with the RS frame they would have found the US defined as the primary enemy. Open hostility to communism during the cold war; prosecution of American communists during the McCarthy era; connections with attacks on Cuba and attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro; and latterly the pursuance of US interests through

⁶¹⁷ ‘Eldon’, interview, February 2005.

international institutions (understood as exploitation of the third world) have all positioned America as the first opponent of revolutionary socialism. While the RL frame and, to a lesser extent, the DA frame identified American neoliberalism as the opponent during the anti-globalization phase of the current cycle of contention, the RS frame has little use for the word 'neoliberalism'. 'Capitalism' has always been understood as the opponent, and the American ruling class as both the major driving force for spreading capitalism and the primary beneficiary of global capitalism. It is no wonder, then, that a US-led attack on any country is interpreted as an attempt to occupy in order to profit the American ruling class. Simplifications of this position, such as describing the invasion of Iraq as a resource war, exemplified by Billy Bragg's anti-war song "The Price of Oil"⁶¹⁸, become common currency within strands of the movement strongly attached to the far left. American belligerence must be opposed as the most obvious example of exploitation on the grand scale. Given the internationalist character of revolutionary socialism, there is no hope for revolution without challenging the strongest capitalist nation.

The UK is similarly understood as an imperialist nation. Evidential claims relate to its colonial past, its heavy involvement in the international arms industry and its involvement in the oil industry.⁶¹⁹ However, while UK ruling class interests may be served by invading Iraq, the UK is also generally understood as subservient to the interests of the US ruling class:

"The US empire, and Britain which has tied itself to its fortunes, is a failing empire, more and more ... they have found it very very difficult to call the shots in the middle east... a precondition for the US to regain its world position is to overcome the obstacles in the middle east."⁶²⁰

This quotation demonstrates first the understanding of the US as a world capitalist power acting in order to bolster its imperial interests. Second, the way that the Britain is included, almost as an aside, demonstrates the notion of Britain as subservient. Elsewhere, 'Eldon' is careful to delineate the independent interests of the British ruling class. Others, however, consider the balance further towards the notion of the US as masters. One long term SWP activist explained the war as:

"to do with the world political balance of forces, and Bush had his role as he saw it, he was the boss, ... he says what happens on this planet ... all the neocons, Wolfowitz and co, are primarily concerned to spread the

⁶¹⁸ The song was very widely distributed in the anti war movement, on the fundraising CD, *Peace not War*.

⁶¹⁹ It was often claimed that three of the four worlds largest oil companies are British; 'Eldon', interview, February 2005, 'Joe', interview, January 2005.

⁶²⁰ 'Eldon', interview, February 2005.

American way of life. What does that mean? They want the whole world to function on the basis of competition.”⁶²¹

Moving to explain UK involvement, ‘Hardy’ refers to Tony Blair, arguing, “he is doing somebody’s bidding. However, whether that’s George Bush’s bidding, or the neocons behind George Bush, or similar people in this country ... I frequently think he just does what he’s told.”⁶²² Again these quotations demonstrate both the notion of the American ruling class acting in their own imperial interests and the notion that the UK is subservient to the US.

These ideas, expressed by Sheffield based activists central to anti-war organising, appear similarly across the UK. Two of the most frequently used symbols on placards, tee-shirts and banners on the national demonstrations were George Bush represented as a cowboy and Tony Blair as a poodle. Often riding a missile in place of a horse the ‘Texan cowboy’ was always linked with oil. The image conjures up the idea of independently ‘looking after number one’, displaying disregard for the law and is, of course, quintessentially American. The rather more surreal image of the British Prime Minister as a poodle, whose leash was often handled by Bush, served simply to reinforce the notion of subordination.⁶²³ In sum, the RS frame saw the war drive as the result of the necessity of economic expansion that creates imperialism. In particular, the US is understood as the primary capitalist nation which, with the UK following in its wake, was fighting for scarce resources and geopolitical control.

Within the RL frame we should, according to my description in chapter five, expect an account that investigates the particular features of the particular case, through the lens of a moral standpoint based on a balance of individual rights with a value for power equality. Some common arguments entirely eschew speculation on the intention of the US administration and rather aim to argue directly with the justifications offered for the war. First, because the war was an extension of the war on terror, the most immediate question to occur within the RL frame was, would this war increase or decrease incidents of terrorism? Assuming that increased human suffering at the hands of the US military would increase the potential pool of recruits to Al Qaeda or other terrorist organisations, many RL frame proponents argued that war on Iraq would

⁶²¹ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶²² ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶²³ Field notes; these symbols were seen frequently throughout the period of anti-war activism though primarily in relation to the Iraq-focused phase of the movement. Interestingly, such symbols draw on a tradition of interpretation of the US-UK relationship and similar representations were used during the Thatcher-Regan era.

inevitably increase terrorist incidents.⁶²⁴ Second, because the war was justified on the grounds of an immediate threat of Iraq attacking another country, the claim that Iraq had developed weapons of mass destruction was sometimes directly challenged. More often, however, arguments focused on the notion that weapons inspectors should be given more time to examine the evidence. A threatened invasion was understood as likely to increase the chance that such weapons would actually be used.⁶²⁵ Third, the prospective invasion was often described as being against international law. The long debate over the ‘second resolution’ within the UN Security Council was clearly important here. However, claims to disrespect of international law by the US had a much more general nature, indicating some of the same evidential claims cited above as part of the case made within the RS frame. Additionally, the establishment of Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay in April 2002 appeared to conflict with both the Geneva Convention and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Because such legal protections of the individual are seen as essential for the protection of liberty and the avoidance of suffering, the perception of US as acting outside of international law tarnished US attempts to invoke past resolutions from the UN Security Council with unacceptable hypocrisy.

The final point links us to those arguments that did take account of the motivations of the US and UK governments. Here the argumentation with the RL frame becomes closer to that of the RS frame. The understanding of power within the frame sees the potential for powerful elites to work to their own interests in a number of different spheres. While the US had been criticised for its dogmatic approach to economics, and its control of the ‘purse strings’ within the IFIs, the focus now shifted to its military power. Many respondents referred to the Strategic Defense Review produced by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC)⁶²⁶ in order to criticise the ambitions of American power.⁶²⁷ While ‘Joe’ simply noted the importance of “dominance, economic, military and cultural dominance”⁶²⁸, ‘Edgar’ argued,

“In then end it all comes back to the idea that they think that strength of arms and power are the most important things ... and they need to get as

⁶²⁴ For example: Olnier, D., 2002, “War with Iraq will make the world more dangerous, not less” on *Sheffield Base*, available at: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/base/waroniraq.shtml>; last accessed: 27/08/05.

⁶²⁵ ‘Pete’, field notes, February 2003.

⁶²⁶ Project for the New American Century, 2002, “Rebuilding America’s Defenses. Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century” available at: <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>; last accessed: 12/12/05.

⁶²⁷ ‘Harriet’, interview, December 2004.

⁶²⁸ ‘Joe’, interview, January 2005.

much of it as they possibly can... the US don't see any distinction between them taking that power, and their ideas of freedom and justice ... they have to try to make a world in the image of US interests ... [and are] working on the basis of making sure that no other power base ever emerges"⁶²⁹

Underlying specific arguments concerning the potential outcomes of war, therefore, was a perception of American foreign policy being oriented only towards the fulfilment of American interests and, therefore, public justifications for the war missed the key point. At this point the difference between the critique from within the RL frame and that within the RS frame narrows. George Monbiot appears to straddle the boundary by titling one Guardian column, "Wilfully blind to the empire: Why can't liberal interventionists see that war in Iraq is part of a bid to cement US global power?" Referring to documents from PNAC and others he argued that the war on Iraq was part of a wider strategy of dominance that related to military and economic power and specifically the control of oil reserves and shipping lanes.⁶³⁰ Yet the piece was apparently targeted to liberals who might be convinced by the case for humanitarian intervention. Monbiot is willing to argue in terms of an American imperial strategy, therefore, while his general analysis, as described in chapter five, is closer to the liberal cosmopolitanism of academics like David Held than to Trotsky or Lenin.

Among the ideational elements central to the DA frame we find less of a focus on analysis, and more on proposals for action. It is clear, however, that the end point of analysis was distrust of both US and UK governments, a position which flows naturally from their distrust of power. The US were seen to be acting to secure oil; "basically, America has taken over that country and its there to steal its resources."⁶³¹ As with the RS frame, UK government complicity is expected both because of a history of supporting US intervention, and because they are seen to have their own interests. However, those working within the DA frame are more likely to stress individual culpability. An evaluation of the drive to war, and the inability of the anti-war movement to stop that, includes the idea that, "at the end of the day loads of Labour MPs were prepared to go in and vote for the fucking thing ... the people with the power have more responsibility for what happened."⁶³² The final part of that quotation is key to the frame. Those who attempted to stop the war through direct action were understood as potentially creating power for themselves, and as creating a space in

⁶²⁹ 'Edgar', interview, February 2005.

⁶³⁰ Monbiot, G., 2003, "A wilful blindness. Why can't liberal interventionists see that Iraq is part of a bid to cement US global power?" in *The Guardian*, 11/03/2003.

⁶³¹ 'Isadore', interview, June 2004.

⁶³² 'Daniel', interview, July 2004.

which empowerment could happen. However, the starting point is a position of relative powerlessness. It is no surprise, within the DA frame, that MPs were willing to vote for the war because they are part of a powerful elite that works to its own interests:

“None of the three main parties would change their policy to war if they happened to be in power right now. That’s because this war is their war: the war of capitalism and imperialism. Politicians simply control the way capitalists operate, controlling and directing various vested interests as they arise at different points of time... The ‘UN route’ is simply a diversion to gloss over the illegitimacy of a war against Iraq, using the UN as a fig leaf for the stark necessities of imperialism.”⁶³³

In addition to further demonstrating the distrust of power this quotation also thoroughly links the realms of politics and economics. The authors of this flyer are clearly happy to borrow the language of imperialism from within the RS frame while at the same time wholly intending to promote direct action, demonstrating the close analytical link between the two frames.

Finally, it is among the DA frame that the critique of hypocrisy is most likely to be used. Here, the relevant arguments are around the past actions of the US governments:

“It was the CIA who helped put Saddam in power and it was the West who helped keep him there. It was the US who sold materials that it knew could easily be used to make nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, even after the Iraqi government had slaughtered 6,000 Kurds in its chemical bombardment of Halabja in 1988. A year later John Kelly, US Assistant Secretary of State, visited Baghdad and told Hussein “You are a force for moderation in the region, and the United States wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq.” ... Saddam’s problem ... [is that he] now refuses to toe the American line.”⁶³⁴

This quotation emphasises the dishonesty perceived in the arguments put forward for war, and in particular any argument to humanitarian interests. Power is clearly understood here as both self-serving and self-reinforcing. Scepticism is the natural attitude taken to the claims of governments within the DA frame, and finding the arguments for war unconvincing serves to reinforce this attitude: “There’s a mask of legitimacy, a mask of democracy, that has really slipped this year with the whole Gulf war thing, the mask of the politicians representing the people.”⁶³⁵ Finding the belligerent governments guilty of hypocrisy from both the RL and DA frames shows another point at which, from different starting points, analysis of the war converged within the anti-war movement.

⁶³³ DAAWN, 2003, “Direct Action Against War Now”, flyer distributed early February, 2003.

⁶³⁴ Anon., 2002, “Oil Slip Up” in *Schnews* 367, 09/08/03.

⁶³⁵ ‘Scot’, interview, May 2003.

Reinforcing Unity

The three frames each take an analysis of the war that leads to the same end-point: the perception of (particularly US) power as self-serving and dishonest. The subtly different emphases of the frames tend, I have suggested, to lead to the presentation of particular information about US power from different perspectives. Nevertheless, since these different sets of information were non-contradictory, and indeed generally complementary, they were easily merged into justifying the primary purpose of the anti-war movement. Nevertheless, the different bases of analysis were to arise within the coalitional arena. For instance, neither the RL frame nor the DA frame sit easily with the economic determinism of the RS frame. Arguments from the base of class, and to the necessity of revolution, have the potential for creating conflict. Similarly, only within the RL frame was the notion of justifiable military intervention, legitimated by the UN, conceivable. Those working within either the RS or DA frames were far more likely to understand legitimation by the UN as a demonstration either that the UN was equally interested in the exercise of (imperial) power for the benefit of elites or that it was beholden to the US and UK power.

Though not without exception, most of the various anti-war coalitions created largely successful strategies for coping with diversity and avoiding schism. Primarily this involved the avoidance of conflict within the movement through the explicit recognition that the movement's greatest asset was its broad base of support. The corollaries of this idea are, first, that participants must accept, rather than challenge, the different beliefs within the movement, and second, that it is desirable to avoid the conflict that would result from groups and individuals within the movement attempting to push their own interpretations. For instance, reacting to several emails criticising the behaviour of some sections of protests on Day-X, in particular the use of sound systems and dance on what, for some, should have been a sombre occasion, one activist retorted: "You appear to have shot straight past the most relevant aspect of the current wave of protests ... namely that the basis for protest is a broad based movement."⁶³⁶

However, the flip-side of appeals to unity is that certain ideas and interpretations simply don't get discussed. 'Orson' noted that, "stop the war meetings were never places where things got thought through. And, there was a certain group there who had decided what they were going to do, which doesn't help."⁶³⁷ While 'Orson' clearly believes that this is partly because of an intentional strategy by some political grouping

⁶³⁶ 'Giles', email, March 2003.

⁶³⁷ 'Orson', interview, December 2004.

to retain a particular agenda, 'Harriet' felt that group dynamics, coupled with a tendency to a 'more radical than thou' attitude, might be to blame:

"We were operating on the basis that we were against the war ... but we didn't necessarily talk about what the alternatives were ... or even if anybody that the war might be a good idea. There's often not much scope for those kinds of conversations, because it doesn't feel safe enough ... nobody wants to feel that they're the odd one out, or that they're being reactionary in any way, or too influenced by the government ... For me personally, I think it might be a fear of being ticked off really, or feeling a bit put down, or being a bit humiliated for not having enough knowledge"⁶³⁸

This quotation implies that, to an extent, unity may have been a false construction. 'Harriet' remained optimistic, however, that "When the chips are down ... we overcome these differences, this sectarianism or whatever... people might be doing it for different reasons ... [but] people feel that they can and want to do something about it."⁶³⁹ What this indicates is the possibility of a sense of collective identity around the simple theme of 'stop the war' that could transcend the divisions in analysis.

Indeed, if 'collective identity' is to have conceptual value within an interpretation of the anti-war movement it is precisely between unity and diversity that we should find it. In chapter two I argued that collective identity offers a potential ameliorative to the tendency, in using an analysis of interpretative frames, to over-emphasise the cognitive aspects of thought within movements at the expense of the emotive. A brief examination of the more emotive elements within the anti-war movement proves illustrative. The most obvious point is that it is clear that participants did not interpret their involvement as dependent on a positive evaluation of chances of success. Those involved noted that at times they saw the war as unstoppable, but that this was not a reason not to protest.⁶⁴⁰ Rather,

"what I do is about how do I acceptably live in the world as it is. So if I did nothing I would find it very difficult to be here... I do it for my sanity at the same time as it means you can put yourself in situations where it continually brings home the vastness of the barriers to social change."⁶⁴¹

A very clear theme of the demonstrations, and one that re-occurs frequently in the quotations presented by the mainstream media is the idea of sending a message. The main slogan of the F15 demonstration, 'Not in My Name', was obviously aimed at making a moral stand that separated the protester from the government no matter what the outcome. The attempt to publicly differentiate oneself from those with an

⁶³⁸ 'Harriet', interview, December 2004.

⁶³⁹ 'Harriet', interview, December 2004.

⁶⁴⁰ 'Kara', interview, December 2004.

⁶⁴¹ 'Daniel', interview, June 2004.

alternative analysis of the war may be understood as an identity claim that specifically excludes those in power. ‘Harriet’ explained, “I wanted my voice to be heard and wanted, very much, to group together with others who felt similarly, that the war was wrong, and really felt it.”⁶⁴² In doing so she hints at the second notable strand of emotive reasoning. Finding others who ‘felt similarly’ must be at the base of any notion of collective identity and is clearly reinforced by the participation in the large demonstration: “you know that bit where everyone roared, and you heard that roar approaching, that bit, that sound, you just thought, ‘shit!’ That welled up, yeah,”⁶⁴³ At the end of the F15 march many participants noted the sounds of the protest in similar way, or alternatively referred to looking between buildings and seeing another part of the march coming in the other direction when they realised “just how big it was, so many people, all there for the same thing.”⁶⁴⁴

Unity was, therefore, reinforced by rituals of protest that encouraged a sense of belonging and a recognition that others were motivated by the same feelings, no matter what their particular analysis. Nevertheless, in movement argumentation there was also a clear appeal to unity that recognised political diversity, while at the same time attempting to minimise its negative effects. In this regard the appeal is not entirely dissociated from the orientational frame being utilised by the person making it. ‘Joe’, for instance, argued:

“We can all argue that you can't coherently oppose wars without acknowledging their place in the capitalist logic ... but by using this campaign to push wider issues, we are in danger of losing this battle (many people are not ready to come that far down the road; for some, this is the first anti-war campaign they have supported) and we do a grave disservice to the Iraqi people. We sometimes need to bite our tongues in order to build the largest most inclusive movement possible and prove that we are indeed, as my comrades keep insisting, in the majority.”⁶⁴⁵

I present this quotation at length because, in addition to its appeal to unity, it indicates a particular perspective on the purpose of unity. It comes from an SWP member following what had been an acrimonious SAW meeting in which the SWP had attempted to push for a change in organisational structure. ‘Joe’ acted independently of his comrades in the meeting and was clearly willing to hear different sides of the debate. Nevertheless, his language hints at use of the RS frame in two key ways. First, there is the assumption that many people are not ‘yet’ ready to take a more radical anti-

⁶⁴² ‘Harriet’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁴³ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁴⁴ Anon., field notes, February 2003.

⁶⁴⁵ ‘Joe’, email, December 2002.

capitalist critique. This seems to imply the view of class consciousness described in chapter three. Second, it demonstrates the particular vision of what was needed to stop the war, namely 'the largest most inclusive movement'. This, however, is undoubtedly a conception of social change that fits more easily into the RS frame than to either of the others I have identified. To be sure, all activists were seeking a large, broad-based movement. However, within the DA frame it was quite possible that change could be achieved by smaller groups of more committed individuals, and the RL frame, as explained in chapter five, has a more ambiguous relationship with popular protest. In subsequent sections I will examine these differences in detail.

4. DIFFICULTIES IN DIVERSITY: DIRECT ACTION VERSUS 'THE MOVEMENT'

As noted above, the initial development of the anti-war movement immediately involved a diversity of political backgrounds. Rather than causing tensions the diversity of the initial band of activists took the appearance of tactical creativity. The first Sheffield street demonstration encompassed direct action tactics with a critical mass styled 'Bikes not Bombs', humanitarian activities under the title 'Food not Bombs' and a more traditional march and rally followed later by the cultural 'Beats not Bombs'.⁶⁴⁶ Nationally, CND agreed to rename its planned and permitted demonstration about nuclear weapons in space to be directly 'Stop the War' and thus underlined its cooperation with the communists and Trotskyists in the StWC. On the same day, the Campaign for the Accountability of American Airbases, usually known for affinity group airbase break-ins, held a mass demonstration at USAF Menwith Hill. The image of tactical and political diversity that these early protests portray was one associated with the anti-war movement throughout. However, the simple occurrence of different forms of protest, even where they are simultaneous, does not demonstrate a genuine acceptance of others' ideas. Rather, I will argue, most activists remained committed to a particular set of tactics throughout both phases of anti-war activity. Examination of the debate over direct action illuminates a number of subtle differences in the broader positions of the various frames. These relate, first, to the potential for convergence on tactics between the DA and RS frames and, second, to the ambivalence within the RL frame to the mass demonstration. The latter returns to the notion of collective identity and I will illustrate both its unifying and divisive tendencies.

⁶⁴⁶ Field notes, October 2001.

The Call to Direct Action

Large national demonstrations, backed by the well-funded public relations officers of the StWC and drawing wide participation, managed to garner much more attention from the press than direct actions. Yet throughout the period of study direct action focused on military bases across the country was rife. In England alone, USAF Fairford in Gloucestershire, USAF Lakenheath and USAF Mildenhall in Cambridgeshire, Feltwell US Space Command in Norfolk and RAF Fylingdales and NSA/USAF Menwith Hill in Yorkshire were all the focus of a range of actions which included break-ins, blockades, people locking their heads together on runways, criminal damage to aircraft, mass protests, protest camps and mass 'weapons inspections'. The number of people involved in actions ranged from very small affinity groups to thousands protesting at Menwith Hill on 22nd March 2003. In what could be interpreted as a competition to influence the newer participants, public calls for a greater focus on direct action were frequently made. One flyer, 'Disobedience', distributed at the 28th September march, proclaimed 'Direct Action Can Stop This War!'. While not directly criticising the StWC, it argued: "If you go to one demonstration and then go home, that's something, but people in power can live with that. What they can't live with is sustained pressure that keeps building ... people that learn from the last time and do it better next time."⁶⁴⁷ Clearly, the implication is that sustained direct action is the only effective method of protest.

The StWC did, in fact, put its organisational backing and publicity behind a day of coordinated non-violent direct action for 31st October. Around the UK 300 different actions were reported to StWC. In Sheffield a critical mass, a number of demonstrations and the occupation of a university department with a relationship to British Aerospace took place throughout the day. In total approximately 600 people were involved. The day served as a powerful indication to activists more aligned to the DA frame that there was a genuine respect for a diversity of tactics within the leadership of the anti-war movement. Later, Daniel noted that, "there have not been any substantial political differences in the Sheffield coalition for the last few months, since the national coalition and SWP accepted the validity of direct action. Sheffield has, I think, been a model of unity."⁶⁴⁸ However, by the time of the massive F15 demonstration the tone had changed. The date had been set since the previous November at a meeting of the European Social Forum in Florence. StWC's plans for the day appeared to be identical to those for the September 2002 march. This was

⁶⁴⁷ Fashionably Late Collective, 2002, flyer distributed in London, 28/09/05.

⁶⁴⁸ 'Daniel', interview, July 2004.

interpreted among some as a rejection of direct action. A new network, Direct Action Against War Now (DAAWN) complained:

“February 15th will be the biggest anti-war march we have ever seen, but will it be that different? Marching from A to B, constrained, controlled, imprisoned and made impotent by barriers, police and stewards... The leadership of the anti-war movement organises mass rallies, alongside local initiatives. Its been doing this for more than a year now yet war seems more inevitable than ever. The simple fact is that the war machine can ignore our voices if we continue to be herded around... As anti-war activists, we need to continue to show our commitment to direct action as a form of direct democracy. This means direct action on the streets, on the day when thousands will be able to join us.”⁶⁴⁹

The leaflet provided a list of government targets, embassies and companies involved in the arms trade as suggested targets for direct action. The quotation from the flyer clearly indicates that the activists involved found the national StWC’s entire strategy unconvincing. It also demonstrates the link between direct action and democracy. Echoing debates between CND and the DAC four decades earlier some anti-war activists had argued that certain forms of direct action are not acceptable within a democracy. Direct action is understood as an application of force with negative effects on bystanders. One activist asked, “Are we hoping to make life so uncomfortable for citizens that the government is forced to change its policy?”⁶⁵⁰ However, for the authors of this leaflet, direct action is a form of democracy in itself because it potentially offers anyone the chance to have their voice heard. The wide focus on F15 had produced a point of competition. Later, the March date for Menwith Hill actually clashed with a major national demonstration, the first after the war began, signalling increased division within the movement.

Close examination of one local event illustrates the points at which tactical differences between frames ossified. Nationally, the StWC returned to direct action in the planning of Day-X activities. The day immediately after the start of hostilities was billed as ‘Stop the City, Stop the War’. The intention was that local ‘spontaneous’ actions would take place to cause as much economic disruption as possible. Following their success of the previous October, the Sheffield University Stop the War Coalition (SUSTWC), in planning for Day-X, once again aimed at occupation. During this period friction between those working within a DA frame and those within the RS frame ran particularly high, with one of the direct action planners confiding his feelings about a local SWP organiser with, “I was brought up by Quakers, and have sat through a thousand frustrating meetings, but if he says ‘elitist’ one more time I’m gonna punch

⁶⁴⁹ DAAWN, 2003, “Direct Action Against War Now”, flyer circulated in early February 2003.

⁶⁵⁰ Quotation from Jones, T., 2002, “Direct Action to Stop The War – Bulletin One”, widely circulated by email, 12/11/02.

him.”⁶⁵¹ The argument that direct action is essentially ‘elitist’, and therefore an unacceptable form of action is worth further consideration.

The SWP organiser, along with many of his comrades, understood any direct action as essentially elitist. This argument, which had also come up in SAW meetings,⁶⁵² pointed to the need for protest actions to be inclusive. If not enough people were prepared to take part then the working class was not ready for that stage of class conflict. The democratic tension within the RS frame is created because, on the one hand, there is a high value placed on the self-emancipation of the working class, and on the other, there is a recognised need for a representative vanguard party to lead those not yet conscious of the class conflict inherent in capitalist society. However, because both of these positions are simultaneously maintained, it is impossible for direct action to fit within this particular version of the RS frame. First, direct action affinity groups are not large enough to represent self-emancipation and, second, the anti-war group cannot take the role of the vanguard party because it is a single-issue coalition.⁶⁵³ On the practical level, direct action implies a level of prior, secretive planning and training which cannot, by definition, be open to mass participation. For the direct activists, however, the charge of elitism simply didn’t make sense. Their own participation proved that anybody could potentially take the same action. Furthermore, having taken occupation of a central building, they assumed that others would be encouraged to join the occupation and so encounter an empowering space. While the understanding of democracy within the RS frame requires a group capable of representing a mass, that within the DA frame requires participation without representation. The tactical debates within this small anti-war group, therefore, mirror the conceptual differences between the frames and illuminate their different understandings of democracy.

In addition to demonstrating one of the key disharmonies within the anti-war movement, this discussion illustrates an understanding of the longer term strategic ambitions within the DA frame. Certainly at the local level, direct activists appeared focused purely on the task of stopping the war, “that end goal is definitely worthwhile; the rest of it, capitalism and all the other problems are still here, but, something somewhere has been made better for some people.”⁶⁵⁴ However, the notion of empowerment serves to give these ambitions some longer term relevance. Participation in direct action may sow the seeds for further struggle. This would explain why, for

⁶⁵¹ ‘Gavin’, field notes, March 2003.

⁶⁵² ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁵³ This is a particularly sharp problem for the SWP which, as described in chapter three, has a historical tendency to see itself, and only itself, as the viable vanguard.

⁶⁵⁴ ‘Isadore’, interview, June 2004.

activists like ‘Daniel’ cited in section one, the involvement of school students on Day-X was the most hopeful feature of the movement.

In their long-term analysis some working broadly within the RS frame had their sights on a bigger goal than simply stopping the war. For the SWP organisers, building the vanguard party is one step to revolution, although this may be conceived as a very distant ambition. Some SWP members had a very direct understanding; when asked if the anti-war movement contained revolutionary potential ‘Hardy’ answered: “Oh yes, I do ... I was mentally preparing various emails to Nether Edge people saying, ‘Well, we’ve stopped the war, now what else can we stop, or start.’ ... And that is still on the agenda I think ... very much indeed.”⁶⁵⁵ Others, with an analysis of the British working class that sees it as highly unlikely to find the consciousness and unity to achieve anything of that scale, saw stopping the war as the end in itself. Given this end, and an understanding of the working class as holding immense structural power, the strike becomes the obvious tactic. ‘Kara’ was highly sceptical of the possibility of stopping the war through mass demonstrations and instead argued for strike action, “you wouldn’t be able to get official strike action, you’d have to get unofficial action, which is illegal. Apart from that point, you wouldn’t be asking them to bring down capitalism at the same time, you’re only asking them to stop a war ... not calling for the overthrow of society and death to the tsars.”⁶⁵⁶

Despite complaints about the lack of strike action there is also a tendency to understand the movement as a great success. The frequent claim that “we were so close, we came within an ace of stopping the war”⁶⁵⁷, was coupled with stories about Tony Blair having prepared his resignation speech.⁶⁵⁸ This evaluation tended to assume that the failure of the anti-war movement to achieve its primary goal was predominantly a quantitative failure: had a greater number of people been involved it may have finally forced more British politicians to move away from the pro-war stance. For others, also operating within the RS frame, however, this does not provide a convincing analysis. If the governments of the US and Britain were intent to go to war in order to bolster their weakening, crisis-prone imperial economies, then politicians were hardly likely to vote against the war *en masse*:

“since the anti-war movement was never able to offer a convincing answer of why Blair was going to war ... they could never really answer the question of what was going to be necessary to stop it... It shows the

⁶⁵⁵ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁵⁶ ‘Kara’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁵⁸ ‘Isadore’, interview, June 2004; ‘Joe’, interview, January 2005.

bankruptcy and opportunism of the so-called revolutionaries within the movement, because it is absolutely clear that no way could we ever rely on any configuration of MPs in parliament to actually vote in accordance with the will of the majority”⁶⁵⁹

‘Eldon’ was among those who rejected the ‘poodle Blair’ image, instead emphasising the independent interests of the British ruling class. His resulting analysis, highly critical of those from the central Trotskyist organisations, is remarkably similar to the DAAWN flyer cited above, which argued: “None of the three main parties would change their policy to war if they happened to be in power right now. That’s because this war is their war: the war of capitalism and imperialism.”⁶⁶⁰

The potential for convergence between the RS and DA frames can also be demonstrated with respect to the planning for ‘Day-X’. This had assumed that given the beginning of hostilities, it would be both necessary and acceptable to increase the level of contention. When StWC named the protests ‘Stop the City, Stop the War’, echoing the calls of direct actionists within the movement, that appeared to be the intention. To ‘stop the city’ was to cause so much disruption as to have a significant economic effect. Because both the RS and DA frames contain a confrontational attitude towards a relatively homogenised political and economic elite, both can condone highly disruptive tactics. Because both understand politics and economics as inextricably combined within capitalism, both can target economic institutions or processes. This was generally used as the justification for street-blocking tactics such as critical masses or sit-ins: “Disruption of transport routes ... causes a severe headache for the government because of the potential economic disruption... The more efficiently the economy functions the more easily the British war machine can continue. People commuting to and from work forms part of this process.”⁶⁶¹ This quotation presents an argument that was frequently used and could patently be well-understood from both the DA or the RS frames.

However, the tensions between those working with the two frames had never been satisfactorily resolved and no protest had yet demonstrated an effective way of getting across the tactical divide indicated in the discussion of elitism above. Furthermore, the involvement of those working within the DA frame in the coalition meetings was limited. Those who wished to focus on protests at American bases saw little need to be involved in a city centre group⁶⁶² and for some involved in direct action groups within

⁶⁵⁹ ‘Eldon’, interview, February 2005.

⁶⁶⁰ DAAWN, 2003, “Direct Action Against War Now”, flyer circulated in early February 2003.

⁶⁶¹ ‘Giles’, email, March 2003.

⁶⁶² ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

the city, the group structure, involving elected officials and vote-based decision making, was unappealing.⁶⁶³ Those direct activists who did participate in the meetings were often blocked because they were clearly in the minority. In SAW “some people had been trying to push direct action but the response was basically ‘not in the coalition’s name’.”⁶⁶⁴ The disappointment with the Day-X protest activities noted in section two was widespread. For some, the argument to economic disruption was unconvincing, as “we were just pissing people off really, pissing off people we really shouldn’t be pissing off.”⁶⁶⁵ For others poorly executed direct action was the near-inevitable result of a lack of focus on direct action throughout the period.

“Some of the problems ... went back to the previous November when the Stop the War Coalition flirted with direct action and then walked away from it... So it meant that when it came to the day the war broke out, and there were calls for strikes and that sort of thing floating around, and walk outs and we got school students only. And that shouldn’t surprise anybody because it hadn’t been built up ... I think people’s response to it was, oh we’ve marched and nothing has changed ... we can’t do anything, nothing can be done, we’re not listened to.”⁶⁶⁶

What this quotation clearly demonstrates is an association between the tendency to limit the tactics of the movement to the mass march and a feeling of disempowerment. This clearly connects to the belief, within the DA frame, that action cannot be focused on persuading others to act, but only on acting for oneself. Because direct actions had received relatively little attention the movement was understood as disempowered. From the DA frame, then, the movement is most properly understood as having failed because it had limited the potential for empowerment in action.

For ‘Eldon’ at least, a misfit between analysis and strategy led to the failure in the anti-war movement. The attempt to influence politicians appears as ineffective within either the RS or DA frames, and is rather something that flows from the RL frame. It is certainly the case that some local activists within the Trotskyist organisations believed in the possibility of winning through influencing parliament, demonstrating the ability for individual activists to utilise different frames at different times. However, the other explanation for this apparent misfit refers back to the ambition of the SWP to build the vanguard party. With this in mind, it is perfectly fitting to present an analysis from within a more liberal-oriented frame if that analysis is believed to be more likely to win bystanders to the cause. To the extent that appeals to unity restricted the potential for

⁶⁶³ ‘Daniel’, interview, July 2004.

⁶⁶⁴ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁶⁶ ‘Daniel’, interview, July 2004.

presenting a 'radical' analysis, it additionally impacted on strategy, making victory through parliamentary pressure appear conceivable.

Identifying (with) 'The Movement'

As explained above, the call to unity was, within the RS frame in particular, grounded in the notion of building the biggest possible movement. The national demonstrations were seen as both a tactic for building the movement and evidence that there was a mass movement. Within the RS frame a mass movement demonstrates rising consciousness among the working class. However, the well-ordered march seems unlikely to fulfil the revolutionary ambition. 'Joe' was quoted in section three explaining that SAW may need to 'bite their tongues' as many people were not ready for the full revolutionary message. In fact, StWC at the national level, and SAW at the local, were certainly understood by some Trotskyists as united fronts within which struggle would aid the wider cause of the vanguard party. 'Joe' left the party as the anti-war movement began to disintegrate. His primary complaint was that,

“there is a huge pressure on normal party members to use demonstrations, especially in the anti-war movement, to flog papers. Then if you flog a paper you get someone to go to a meeting. Then the next stage is signing them up to the party... the party has no problem at all with having lots of paper members who aren't necessarily active... the thing that really separated me from the party was ringing up 13 and 14 year olds who had signed a petition or something, so you keep phoning them and asking if they're coming to this meeting... And I just realised, 'What am I doing? This is ridiculous.'”⁶⁶⁷

This strategy was as obvious to observers as participants, and therefore the cause of suspicion among other anti-war activists. It is common, among newer or 'reactivated' participants to hear a defence of SWP against the critique coming from other sections of the movement. As the use of the anti-war movement in order to increase party membership became more obvious, however, the level of scepticism increased. For instance, 'Harriet', who mentioned a great respect for the SWP after working with the organisation during the 1984-5 miners' strike admitted, "I've come to realise that SWP likes to have mass demonstrations, and maybe it was in its interests to fulfil the worldview that huge mass demonstrations can stop the war.”⁶⁶⁸

I argued in chapter five that within the RL frame there is an ambivalence concerning mass movements. A movement may be understood as a valuable expression of moral condemnation. This may be effective through changing the views of power holders or for the strength that it may lend NGOs who are identified with it. However,

⁶⁶⁷ 'Joe', interview, January 2005.

⁶⁶⁸ 'Harriet', interview, December 2004.

the latter was a strategy that was manifestly unavailable as NGOs could not be part of the relevant decision making processes. In relation to altering the positions of power-holders, two arguments fed into a negative evaluation of the likelihood of the efficacy of moral condemnation. First, there was an increasing scepticism concerning the honesty and independence of elected members of parliament. None of the array of justifications for the war coming from the British government had escaped severe critique within the movement. This was especially the case where the Prime Minister attempted to present a morally argued case for war. As the marchers descended on London for the F15 demonstration, Tony Blair, at a speech in Glasgow, set out the humanitarian justification for war on Iraq. The response within the anti-war movement tended to combine the charge of hypocrisy with the prediction that war could not fulfil the humanitarian goals set out. The speech was interpreted as simply a further attempt to convince a sceptical public where previous justifications had failed, and thus lent further weight to the idea that decision-makers had their own hidden agenda. To the extent that politicians are seen as dishonest or playing to vested interests the efficacy of moral pressure must be reduced. Consequently, the increasing volume of critique of the tactic of mass marches from those working within the DA frame became more widely convincing. 'Orson' had been strongly committed to building for F15, having set up an anti-war group in his local neighbourhood to publicise the demonstration. However, he responded sarcastically when later asked if the demonstration was a viable tactic for changing the governments view; "Yeah right, 'We've come to London, now we're gonna march and then we're going to GO AWAY!'"⁶⁶⁹ 'Orson' argued instead that a display of a much higher level of commitment was required. This suggests, however, a continued belief in the efficacy of the moral claim if sufficiently dramatised. While he recommended particular tactics that appear as direct action, this was justified, not on the direct effect it would have on power holders, but on the strength of the message.

The display of moral commitment may be imbued with efficacy in two ways. On the one hand, action may be intended to display strength of feeling to those in power and thereby convince them to rethink a particular position. On the other, a display of moral commitment may be intended to convince sympathetic members of the general public to join the cause. 'Harriet' argues, "I very much support direct action. But ... I think if you're gonna do something that's direct action, make it as creative and colourful and as entertaining as possible ... Get it on the front page of the Guardian, saying 'this is people who are passionate about what they believe'... you want the world to know about

⁶⁶⁹ 'Orson', interview, December 2004.

it”⁶⁷⁰ This is obviously a different conception of direct action from that described in chapter four and is clearly based on the idea that spreading the message itself has power for change; a notion that makes sense only when you assume that others, on hearing the message, will themselves be convinced to act. This blurs the divide between power-holders and general public, implying that everyone can play some part in changing decisions in a democracy. Alternatively, it may be based on the assumption that moral pressure from a wider base may be more persuasive to power-holders. Either way, these logical links are unlikely to be made explicitly; rather the belief that most social movement activities are at least partly directed to spreading a particular message appears as a generalised axiom.

At this point it is possible to perceive more clearly the tension within the RL frame. First, the belief in the need to present a concrete and detailed analysis does not fit well with the collective sounds of a mass demonstration; there is a recognition that among the mass any potential for detailed analysis is lost and the message may be taken over by simple and misleading slogans. Second, the liberal ideals within the frame can take the form of a high value placed on the ability of any individual to come to a reasoned analysis within a deliberative context. The necessity of expanding the movement obviously implies that those outside of the movement must be convinced. However, there is a perception that the act of defining the movement itself creates divisions that are not easy to overcome.

“If you say, “we are against the war, you are for the war, fuck you,” then that just creates a divide, which is bollocks because you’re not exploring all the issues... its an empowering thing to be in a movement and say I am this, I am stop the war, I am social forum or whatever... But its always gonna be an us against them thing so ... its always gonna be counter productive simply because its wrong.”⁶⁷¹

The creation of unity described in section three can be seen to lead to a situation in which strong barriers are erected, across which it is difficult to communicate. In a similar vein, ‘Eldon’ criticised the StWC on its choice of post-war slogan, ‘No More Lies Mr Blair’. In debate he discovered that those arguing for this slogan insisted on the importance of ‘connecting with people’s anger’ and responded that, “the task of the campaign [becomes] to channel people’s anger ... But people have to learn to control and channel their own anger... Our connection must be first and foremost with people’s intelligence... the problem with giving such priority to “connecting with people’s anger” is that it has no integrity.”⁶⁷² These claims may be related to the appearance of a

⁶⁷⁰ ‘Harriet’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁷¹ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁷² ‘Eldon’, interview, February 2005.

collective identity within social movements. What seems to be occurring is that, on the basis of a simplified unity there is a process of construction of a broad collective identity that necessarily begins to exclude outsiders.

Collective identity appears at different levels of generality. That just described seems to refer to the whole anti-war movement, as in the frequent appeals to ‘all anti-war protesters’ or claims made on behalf of ‘every peace activist’. In addition, some activists describe their own identity at a level that fits closely with particular orientational frames.⁶⁷³ There is evidence that the creation of tensions between different strands of the movement did not relate simply to different analyses and understandings.

“Some SWP members saw the [Sheffield Samba] band as a political rival, as a different centre of attraction. There’s a lot of fear and paranoia in organisations who ... separate themselves out from the rest of the world and tend to ... label others in particular ways: as people who are reformist, or a contact, or a potential recruit, or in this oppositional organisations. People all go into their own slots, and the band went into this slot of being ... political rivals.”⁶⁷⁴

This quotation is doubly illustrative. ‘Daniel’ noted that in identifying people with one or another segment of the movement some SWP members created divisions that made it difficult to work together. However, in doing so he was, of course, doing something similar himself; the quotation demonstrates a negative belief applied to ‘SWP members’ and thereby creates a further division. At a more general level of identity construction, some activists identify themselves as ‘activists’ or ‘politicos’; that is, people who are politically aware and active.⁶⁷⁵ Such identities have perceived consequences on one’s ability to connect with those who are not so involved, “because as a politico you gradually start to see things in a different way to the way a lot of people perceive it, which is to swan through life and take things as read ... if you challenge your assumptions about it you move further and further away.”⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ ‘Kara’ for instance, frequently begins claims with “I am a socialist, so I believe...”; interview, December 2004. Similar quotations were seen from ‘Hamilton’ in chapter three.

⁶⁷⁴ ‘Daniel’, interview, July 2004. The Sheffield Samba Band had coalesced as a protest drumming band shortly before the anti-war movement began. They drew their inspiration in part from bands from across Europe seen at the IMF-World Bank Prague demonstrations in September 2000. Many of their members were committed to direct action, with one member travelling to Baghdad before the start of the war to take part in a voluntary ‘Human Shields’ program. ‘Adrian’, field notes, January 2003.

⁶⁷⁵ ‘Harriet’, for instance, makes identity claims across a range of positions, “as anti-government, or socialist or radical, or even activist ... I suppose my identity is that I will always support the underdog”; interview, December 2004.

⁶⁷⁶ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

The ambivalence to the mass movement within the RL frame is, therefore, best understood as a reaction to the creation of collective identities which implicitly define political positions and opponents. Identities are thereby understood as reducing the potential of convincing those outside of the movement of the message being portrayed. The stress on remaining open to argument within the RL frame, in conjunction with its tendency understand international institutions as potential sites of positive social change, produced one further potential division within the anti-war movement. There was a tendency among those central to local anti-war organising to assume that newcomers to the movement were less ‘radical’ and more ‘liberal’ in their political outlook, where these terms were understood to imply a general respect for democratic institutions that was, in most cases, relatively uncritical. Nationally, the actions of StWC, for instance in inviting Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy to speak at the rally after the F15 march, demonstrated an attempt to appeal to this constituency. While the notion of ‘building the movement’ within the RS frame appears as an instrumental value appropriate to the bigger goal of strengthening the revolutionary vanguard in the RL frame it appears more as a democratic value. The concerns around stifling debate described above in both the context of meetings and that of demonstrations is motivated by the value placed on hearing a multiplicity of voices.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Where the foregoing analysis touches on activists’ evaluations of the anti-war movement it has been in relation to the objective of stopping the war before it started and therefore mostly negative. In particular, this was described as one way of understanding the fading of the movement from March 2003. However, it is noteworthy that many positive evaluations have been prevalent in movement discourse. These included arguments that the presence of the movement altered the way the war was carried out, potentially reducing civilian casualties and that it reduced the potential for further US-led wars. Activists also commonly refer to the scale and breadth of politicization as valuable for future struggle. The latter can be understood in terms of more people “thinking politically”, who are “not going away”⁶⁷⁷; “a molecular process taking place in everybody’s minds ... transcending the official view, the accepted view, and actually start looking at the world in a different way.”⁶⁷⁸ Alternatively, the benefit of politicization can be seen in more tangible networks that continue to exist and offer

⁶⁷⁷ ‘Harriet’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁷⁸ ‘Eldon’, interview, February 2005.

the potential to respond rapidly to future political changes.⁶⁷⁹ Some local activists, reactivated through SAW, have moved on to different projects. For ‘Larry’ and others, SAW led to the creation of Sheffield Independent Media Collective, who, through the Sheffield Indymedia website create links between local activism and international trends. The creation of Sheffield Indymedia may be one of the most enduring and concrete resources for further activism and represents a number of important lessons learned through the period.⁶⁸⁰ Additionally, a number of key anti-war activists, whether in local groups or in the Sheffield coalition, transferred their energies to the Sheffield Social Forum (SSF). For some activists, that was the very purpose of SSF: “it’s a fantastic idea ... I always thought that the social forum would be a harnessing of the energies of the anti-war movement”⁶⁸¹ It is the development of SSF, within a wider international movement, which I will address in the following chapter.

The hermeneutic methodology of my thesis is designed specifically to capture the ideational formations implicated in the continuing cycle of contention since the eruption of the alternative globalisation movement. As is demonstrated above, these particular ideational formations are highly suggestive in attempting to understand dynamics of the UK anti-war movement. The rapid growth of broad coalitions was premised on the ability of activists with notably different worldviews to converge on a simplified analysis of the reasons for war. This analysis defines the unity of the anti-war movement: it predicted that the consequences of war for Afghani and Iraqi people would be dire and claimed that none of the justifications offered by British or American governments were adequate given the expected level of suffering and the affirmation of fundamental human equality. Furthermore, it found both governments guilty of utilising their powers to further self-interested ends that were obscured by their public justifications. Understanding how these positions were arrived at enables a de-reification of the anti-war movement. On examination of the strategic and tactical understanding within the anti-war movement we find divisions that follow the outlines described in Part II. The relevant strategic positions can be traced to the political beliefs concerning power and agency at the base of the various orientational frames. By focusing on the continuing relevance of particular orientational frames it has been possible to portray the movement dynamically. Self-understandings within the movement, for instance that unity must be maintained, had identifiable results on subsequent movement processes. The various methods by which unity was maintained, I argue, had the effect of hiding the deep implications of the particular critiques.

⁶⁷⁹ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

⁶⁸⁰ ‘Larry’, interview, July 2004.

⁶⁸¹ ‘Kara’, interview, December 2004.

