

## Literary Reflections on the Iraq War in Selected British Novels

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### Abstract

Undoubtedly, the 2003 invasion of Iraq has stirred global interest and prompted an intermarriage between the fields of literature and history. It is the resulting war which enriched the literary field and subsequently shaped the contours of many great British fictitious and non-fictitious writings. The present paper demonstrates how the Iraq War is rendered and fictionalized in three British novels: Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle* (2004), and Melissa Benn's *One of Us* (2009). By analyzing how society shapes the destructive events of one of the most striking wars in the history of Iraq, the study allows for a more critical understanding of the novelistic representations of war. In addition to scrutinizing the realities represented by the narratives, this study endeavors to go over and beyond in reflecting the capacity of such literary works for creating universal themes like morality, legality, and the grapple between good and evil. Findings highlight the textual representation of suffering, repression, trauma, and chaos, all of which plagued Iraq after the downfall of the last political regime. Accordingly, the disintegrated lives of the main characters are mirrored via the nonlinear and fragmented narratives. The conclusion also suggests that such novels play a very sensitive role, at times advocating human rights by resorting to language that evokes tenets of anti-war and antiinterventionist debate, while other times verifying the armed forces and belief that such an intervention is necessary to save nations.

**Keywords:** anti-interventionism; morality; invasion; intervention; Iraq War.

تأملات أدبية حول حرب العراق في روايات بريطانية مختارة

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### ملخص

لا شك أن غزو العراق عام 2003 قد أثار اهتمامًا عالميًا واسعًا، وحفز على تلاقح الأدب والتاريخ. وقد أثرت الحرب الناتجة عن ذلك في إثراء المجال الأدبي، وشكلت لاحقًا ملامح العديد من الأعمال الأدبية البريطانية العظيمة، سواء الروائية أو الواقعية. تُبين هذه الورقة البحثية كيف تم تصوير حرب العراق وتوظيفها في ثلاث روايات بريطانية: رواية "السبت" (2005) لإيان ماك إيوان، ورواية "الدائرة المغلقة" (2004) لجوناثان كوي، ورواية "واحد منا" (2009) لميليسا بن. ومن خلال تحليل كيفية تأثير المجتمع على الأحداث المدمرة لإحدى أبرز الحروب في تاريخ العراق، تُتيح هذه الدراسة فهماً نقدياً أعمق للتصوير الروائي للحرب. إضافةً إلى التدقيق في الحقائق التي تُمثلها الروايات، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تجاوز ذلك، مُسلطةً الضوء على قدرة هذه الأعمال الأدبية على خلق مواضيع عالمية كالأخلاق والقانون والصراع بين الخير والشر. تُبرز النتائج التصوير النصي للمعاناة والقمع والصدمات والفوضى، وهي جميعها أمور عانت منها العراق بعد سقوط النظام السياسي السابق. وبناءً على ذلك، تتعكس حياة الشخصيات الرئيسية المُفككة

من خلال السرد غير الخطي والمُجزأ. كما يُشير الاستنتاج إلى أن هذه الروايات تؤدي دورًا بالغ الحساسية، فهي تُدافع أحيانًا عن حقوق الإنسان باللجوء إلى لغة تُستحضر مبادئ النقاش المُناهض للحرب والتدخل، بينما تُؤكد في أحيان أخرى على ضرورة التدخل لإنقاذ الأمم. الكلمات المفتاحية: مُناهضة التدخل؛ الأخلاق؛ الغزو؛ التدخل؛ حرب العراق .

## 1. Introduction

One of the most arguable and documented events in recent history is the Iraq War. Significantly, this war forms the essential core of the most readable fiction in British-English novels. Matter of fact, the majority of people in England fiercely rejected the idea of participating in war in Iraq, while stressing its tragic consequence and outcome. Without a doubt, every conflict or war would bring chaos and huge disasters to its nation. Hence, this paper does not seek to discuss the corrupt political authority that started after the downfall of the Saddam Hussein regime, nor to promote or praise the current political authority. On the contrary, it primarily focuses on the novels that have emerged out of this conflict and shaped fictional works and cultural narratives. The paper examines three of such novels: Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle* (2004), and Melissa Benn's *One of Us* (2009). These British-English novels are known for tackling the reasons behind the intervention in the Iraq War, which certainly generate some kind of fear and fright, as well as their psychological impact on readers alike.

However, before delving to examine the texts of the selected English fictions concerning the Iraq War, it is necessary to shed light on the science that combines war and culture. In fact, only very few specialists have known or heard of the term 'polemology'. The word 'polemo' is originally Greek, which means 'human war and conflict'. Functioning to support peace and stop any call for war or conflict, polemology is the study of war. Thus, this kind of science is based on academic objectivity and systematic methodology that equips scholars, academics, and scientists with polemological barometers to analyze and study armed conflicts and wars that have happened or are yet to happen. Gaston Bouthoul, the French sociologist who invented the word 'polemology', published his well-known study in 1951 entitled *Les Guerres* (Wars). Bouthoul gathered knowledge and methods of some of the social sciences to create a new interdisciplinary field of research to reflect war and its negative effects (Gardener and Kobtzeff, 2012: 34). Therefore, the present study pays attention to Bouthoul's concept of 'polemology' while analyzing the novelistic representations of war.

Bouthoul used the objective scientific study of war to promote a scientific study of peace and war. Interestingly, the approach used by him is based on the social observation to create such a deep chronology of war, clash, and aggressiveness. In his book *Le Defi de la Guerre* (1976: 34) he says "Polemology presents itself as a scientific study of war". And this systematic study of war "seeks to analyze

and interpret the structural causes (demo-economic, geographic, mental...) which engender collective aggressivity." Furthermore, he believes that in some cases, cultural discourses could play an important role in the materials used at war, thus he reveals all these cultural encodings of war. Ultimately, he creates a scientific technique to build a culture for rejecting the consecration of war.

Accordingly, the approach used in this paper joins different and precise ways to categorize the British-English novelists focusing on the war in Iraq. The study criticizes and analyzes a total of three selected English fictions portraying the War in Iraq. Significantly, the authors of these fictional stories use thematic contexts and different conceptual sources as their bases when discussing the conflict underlying this kind of war. Such a polemological approach paves the way to an interdisciplinary study combining different social sciences, including philosophy, politics, criticism, history, and other humanitarian sciences.

Due to the lack of study on anti-interventionism in fiction work, the study seeks to bridge the gap by vigorously probing into the question of why many British novelists make that debate a fundamental theme in their works and how such fiction represents broader political controversies which are evident in the to be discussed fictional works. Indeed, it is not only interesting to examine the theme of the Iraq War in contemporary novels, but similarly intriguing is the exploration of the different theoretical, cultural, and fictional perspectives from which authors write. In light of the aforementioned, the present paper aims to (1) critically explore how the war has become a focal point and a framework of the narratives of contemporary novelists, (2) understand why the fictional representation of the Iraq War serves an important societal, cultural, and aesthetic function in the novels under scrutiny, and (3) explore the different contexts to see how this war preoccupied many authors from different genders as well as cultural, national, and ethnic backgrounds. It is hypothesized that any fictitious representation of war comes as a result of the entrenchment of physical, psychological, and interpersonal losses experienced by civilians and military alike, hence shaping their perspectives and future decisions.

## 2. Influence of the Iraq War in the Contemporary English Novel

In a world where wars are increasingly occupying the headlines, it is necessary to reveal the oppression and destruction that lay beneath the manipulated cover that politicians draw to justify violence. Wars, commonly known as mass producers of death, traumatize humans and greatly affect their views of life. No exception is the 2003 Iraq War; a US-led invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime from power, which was justified by the rumored possession of weapons of mass destruction. Subsequently, the war preoccupied many novels and discussions, and was repeatedly featured as a thematic topic in a range of American and British novels.

The 2003 Iraq War was a tragic and transitional phase in Iraq's history, ushering in the age of international anti-interventionism. Anti-intervention is one of the most controversial issues the fiction in English literature characterizes and it became the most important theme in the writings of novelists. When the government of Tony Blair announced the readiness of war against Iraq, novelists started to write their fiction to decline any form of militarism or conflict that will lead to immorality of war, dissent, and resistance. Moreover, British authors took issue with the moral and legal justification of the war by providing anti-interventionist discourses that denounced the war as an illegal and/or immoral undertaking as well as refuting the arguments set forth by pro-war people, media and the government.

In his thesis *The Responsibility to Protect or Trojan Horse?* Alex J Bellamy argues that 'the credibility of the United States and the U.K as humanitarian intervention norm carriers has significantly diminished as a result of the Iraq war' (Bellamy, 2005: 51). David Clark, the former British Foreign Office special advisor, argued "that Iraq has wrecked our case for humanitarian wars" (p. 16). On the other hand, any intervention could not be seen as a power for goodness because it will be considered as a medium to violate human rights. When the government of Tony Blair agreed to participate in the Iraq war, many people worldwide, particularly in England, organized lots of demonstrations against the war in Iraq. In his *Key Concepts in Contemporary Literature*, Steve Padley argued that the opposition was unprecedented "The largest articulation of political dissent of the early years of the 21st century was the expression of opposition to the decision by the United States, supported by the British government, to go to war with Iraq in 2003" (2006: 37). Protesters expressed their stance against the decision to begin the war in Iraq.

The selected novels in this study began the creation of such cultural products concerning the war in Iraq. Furthermore, they built an image in the mind of reader to tell him/her that this war (in Iraq) has no legality, and Blair's government mislead its people and the world with the guise of ending the regime of Saddam. Therefore, they claimed that they had to begin the war to let Iraqi people live in peace and democracy. Uniquely, the selected novels in this research also fictionalized the intervention in the Iraq war as aggressiveness and they depicted war as a moral problem. Of course, this would weaken the sovereignty of the United Nations and the International Community.

Accordingly, the three fictions will be studied thematically. To begin with, the main characters in each fiction are analyzed in order to show their stance towards the war in Iraq and if they were anti-interventionists. On the other hand, there are other major characters in these three novels who support the doctrine of interventionism. They see that war is illegal but, some regime worldwide must be ended through armed force. However, the texts of these novels are engaged with

moral philosophy, ethics, and international relations. Therefore, there will be a short summary for each literary work and a critical analysis shedding light on the role of judgement of the major characters to reflect their views on any armed force.

### 3. Methodology

In order to explore how the theme of the Iraq War is represented in contemporary narratives and to what degree it is fictionalized, a selection of English novels is chosen from three different authors, who have centered their writings on the war and its consequences. These novels are Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle* (2004), and Melissa Benn's *One of Us* (2009). Criterion for selection was based on the diverse perspectives from which the Iraq War was perceived in the narration. Another major criterion of selection is the fact that all three texts under scrutiny are British novels originally written in English and therefore all render original texts, i.e., without translation.

The study adopts a polemological approach, which paves the way to an interdisciplinary study combining different social sciences, including philosophy, politics, criticism, history, and other humanitarian sciences. The analysis to follow will examine how the selected British novels critically challenge and engage with the dominant political rhetoric that is aimed at justifying the Iraq War. Moreover, the texts will be scrutinized for their incorporation of critical conceptions that ostensibly preoccupied the cultural and public imagination, ultimately shaping the anti-interventionist discourse. Therefore, the texts to be analyzed will reflect upon realistic events and historical facts. Most importantly how the intervention in Iraq increased disillusion among British citizens, with organized protests and a decline of trust in parliamentary politics as well as railing against politicians in general.

The principal characters in the novels will be carefully studied to judge how they view the war and their attitude towards the interventionist doctrine. This step will allow for a distinction to be drawn between characters who are explicitly antiinterventionists, and others who strongly support the war and the use of armed forces. Each side having their own moral, ethical, and political justification for their opinions. Accordingly, the analysis will be divided into three sections. Each section will examine one novel starting with a brief summary and then drawing on knowledge from key political scientists to highlight the theme of antiinterventionism and how the texts engage with this controversial norm in international relations, political and moral philosophy, and ethics.

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4.1. Ian McEwan: *Saturday* (2005)

This novel is written by the British novelist, dramatist, scenario writer and actor Ian McEwan. He is considered as one of the most influential writers in contemporary British-English literature. His masterpiece *Saturday* portrays the reality of the life of most of the members and politicians of Blair's government pertaining to the Iraq war. This literary work ostensibly fictionalized the attitude of English people towards the decision of the armed force against Iraq. However, this study will specifically focus on how the main characters express their feeling and attitude about the illegal intervention of Blair's government. What McEwan wants from his reader while reading such a kind of work of literature is to deeply study the stance of each major character towards any intervention that is imposed from external vote or country. For example, the main character, Henry Perowne, believes that the regime or the dictatorship of Saddam must be stopped and ended immediately and war is less evil for this purpose, while his daughter Daisy thinks that any war will violate human rights. She also believes that war threatens the peace of the civilian community. Therefore, an attempt will be made to examine how this novel is useful to understand the theories of national security. In order to understand how McEwan's novel represents the division of English people into two fronts; one supporting the war while the other standing against the armed force. This division depends on the different standpoints of the members of parliaments and politicians in Blair's government, regarding the war in Iraq. Thus, we note that the family of Perowne represents that division; for instance, Henry Perowne, the hero, symbolizes a pro-interventionist that supports regime-change and the advocate of liberal values such as freedom and democracy. While his daughter Daisy, represents the anti-interventionist people who protest the war. Furthermore, disagreements, debates, and rival attitudes between the members of the Perowne family stand for the themes of both intervention and anti-intervention. The following dialogue between Henry and his daughter Daisy mirrors the central idea of the humanitarian intervention in Iraq to begin the armed force:

*"How about a short war; the UN doesn't fall apart, no famine, no refugees or invasions by neighbours, no flattened Baghdad and fewer deaths than Saddam causes his own people in an average year? What if the Americans try to organize a democracy, pump in the billions and leave because the president wants to get himself re-elected next year? I think you'd still be against it, and you haven't told me why."*

*"Daddy, you're not for the war, are you?"*

*He shrugs. "No rational person is for war. But in five years we might not regret it. I'd love to see the end of Saddam. You're right it could be a disaster. But it*

*could be the end of a disaster and the beginning of something better. It's all about outcomes, and no one knows what they'll be. That's why I cannot imagine marching in the streets"* (McEwan, 187).

In fact, many theorists in international relations and scholars like Jean Bethke Elshtian, Mary Kaldor, Eric A. Heinze, Fernando Teson, David Rodin, David Mellow, Gillian Brock, Michael Walzer and David Luban support the idea of humanitarian intervention in Iraq for advocating human right and beginning a better life instead of the sovereignty of states.

David Luban, for one, believes that it is necessary to begin the armed forces and humanitarian intervention if the political authority of such country or nation tyrannizes its people. He justifies this intervention and considers it a means to prevent an act of savageness. The pragmatist Michael Walzer argues that intervention is justifiable in urgent cases such as mass murder and genocide. He argues in his book *Just and Unjust Wars* that such cases require intervention: "shock the moral conscience of mankind" (1977: 107). David Rodin also argues that if sovereignty fails to save and protect the rights of its nation the humanitarian intervention is of course justifiable stating that: "The moral status of state sovereignty derives entirely from its role in protecting and furthering human rights and human interests. For this reason, if a state fails to protect, or actively violates, the rights of its citizens, then its sovereignty can no longer function to rule out forcible intervention which is designed to secure those rights" (4).

However, the philosopher Hugo Grotius, regarded as the founder of international law, believes that allies, and friends have the right to intervene and protect people if a state tyrannizes or attacks its citizens. Therefore, an outside intervention is justifiable in this case. He calls this case as 'unheard of cruelties' stressing that "Every sovereign is supreme judge in his own kingdom and over his own subjects, in whose disputes no foreign power can justly interfere, yet where a Basiris... provokes its people to despair and resistance by unheard of cruelties, having themselves abandoned all laws of nature, they lose the rights of independent sovereign, and can no longer claim the privilege of the law of nation" (207).

Opposing to theorists and philosophers in international laws and relations who advocated and proposed the idea of intervention and armed forces, John Stuart Mill, declines any kind of intervention. In his book *A Few Words on NonIntervention*, he argues that an outside or foreign state has no legality to impose freedom and democracy in another country. Furthermore, he states that if people want to get liberation they have to fight against those oppressors. He adds that it is the responsibility of the nation to achieve its freedom and democracy or liberty, which cannot be imported abroad. Mill adds that "If people do not value it sufficiently to fight for it, and maintain it against any force which can be

mustered within the country, ... it is only a question of how a few years or months that people will be enslaved” (Mill, 2007: 6).

Generally, we will see how the conversation between Henry Perowne and his daughter Daisy resembles what haven discussed and explained above. The protagonist Henry Perowne proposes the concept of pro-intervention to end the current regime of Saddam and intervention is justifiable and mandatory in this case to free people from oppression and misery. He adds: *“It’ll be the end of Saddam and one of the most odious regimes ever known, and I’ll be glad...Here’s a chance to turn one country around. Plant a seed. See if it flourishes and spreads”* (189). Perowne believes that Iraq will get freedom, free press, and unmonitored internet access directly three months after the end of war. In contrast, Daisy argues that freedom, independence, and democracy could not come with missiles and blood. She believes that no one can plant a mere tree with that kind of fighting there.

We conclude from this novel that Perowne and his daughter are divided into different fronts; the father advocates and supports the intervention while the daughter rejects completely any armed forces or intervention. She believes that despite the fact that intervention can change such a political regime, but it will ultimately create another disaster in the absence of a system and organization. Therefore, she argues that war must be avoided. In fact, McEwan characterizes Perowne as a pragmatic and realistic man. For example, Perowne knows that a foreign intervention under certain circumstances can impose its interest and influence. Thus, he was generally doubtful about the sincerity of Tony Blair, whether he was informing the truth or deceiving people:

*“Does this man sincerely believe that going to war will make us safer? Does Saddam possess weapons of terrifying potential? Simply, the Prime Minister might be sincere and wrong. Some of his most bitter opponents don’t doubt his good faith. He could be on the verge of a monstrous miscalculation”* (141).

#### 4.2. Jonathan Coe: The Closed Circle (2004)

In this fiction, the main character Paul is a member of The English Parliament during Blair’s government. However, Paul has two challenges in his life, the first one is that he is not sure whether to vote for invasion of Iraq or not, the second one is that he falls in love with a woman. Therefore, his final decision was to leave his wife and begin a new life with the young woman named Malvina. Thus, these personal issues will affect his political life and his vote for the occupation of Iraq was not accurate. Jonathan Coe, here in this novel, tries to discuss how sometimes in our life we could make mistakes between our personal life and the issues related to the own life of other people. Furthermore, Coe chooses Paul as a character who sees things just from one angle, that is to say he does not realize what will happen after the occupation of Iraq. Paul believes that if he votes for

the invasion of Iraq, there will be a great chance for him to use the flat of Mark (his wife's brother). Thereby, Mark will be sent to Iraq and Paul could use his flat and be free in practicing anything with Malvina (the woman he is in extramarital love with). Below is a paragraph about what was going through Paul's mind: *"If we go to war against Iraq, Mark will be sent there too and we can start using his flat again. And this was what he wanted more than anything in the world. One hundred and twenty-one Labour MPs defied the government that night, and voted in favor of the rebel amendment. But Paul was not one of them"* (350- 351).

In fact, Paul and his two friends, Kenneth Clarke and Chris Smith, in the English parliament were unconvinced about the war in Iraq, therefore, Paul was calm for more than six hours to understand the decision made by Tony Blair to begin the invasion of Iraq. Blair's government always tries to convince people and all the British parliament members concerning the war in Iraq.

*"If we ask ourselves today whether the case for war has now been established, I think this house ought to say not, and there is still a case for giving more time to other peaceful alternatives for enforcing our objectives...I have the feeling there is a little blue pencil around a date sometime before it gets too hot in Iraq...He listened as Chris Smith said: There may well be a time for military action...but at the moment the timetable appears to be determined by the President of the United States...He listened as Tony Blair said: "I think the case we have set out in respect of Iraq is a good case. I hope that if people listen to it and study it in detail, they will accept that if we do have to act and go to war, it will not be because we want to, but because of the breaches by Saddam Hussien of UN resolutions"* (349350).

Therefore, in this fiction, we begin to understand the decision made by Paul Trotter, who later starts to think about Iraq, a country situated thousands of miles from the UK. Ultimately, Paul decides to resign from the Parliament and from the party too. He regretted his vote for invading Iraq and that his decision was wrong because of his narrow personal interest. Paul becomes completely convinced that the war in Iraq was illegal and immoral. Consequently, Paul sends a letter to Tony Blair informing him about his decision:

*"It is with great regret that I feel I must tender my resignation as a Member of Parliament...I feel greater unease about this war than about anything else you have led the party into during your period of office...Voting against the rebel amendment, and for the invasion of Iraq, was the only political act of my career on which I look back with shame. It was such a huge misjudgement, in fact, that it forced me to look hard at my motives for making it; and when I did so, I realized that a complete revolution had taken place in the relationship between my political and personal priorities. It was this realization that led directly to the decision to leave my wife, and so, unavoidably, to the decision to resign. Please forgive me, Prime Minister, for any distress, embarrassment or political damage*

*which my actions might cause. You will read this letter, I suspect, with mounting disbelief and anger. But after giving all of these matters much thought, I am convinced, finally, that I have done the right and honorable thing.*

*In continuing friendship and admiration.*

*Yours truly,*

*Paul Trotter (401-403).*

Clearly, this letter addresses many issues. The first and most important is that Paul doubts whether Saddam possessed or aimed to possess doubtful weapons and that he must be toppled. Therefore, some critics believe that this intervention is immoral and illegal. As for instance when Kenneth Roth, a specialist in human rights, believes that the intervention in Iraq is not legitimate and unjustifiable. Thus, Paul was afraid and guilt stricken about the invasion of Iraq and what would happen after toppling the political regime. Paul questions this saying: “*And once he is toppled, what will follow? ... My great fear is that we have not even begun to imagine the possible consequences for this Middle Eastern adventure*” (402).

Basically, this novel compares what happened to Iraqis when they got their freedom, independence, and democracy and what happened to Susan, Paul’s first wife after being cheated on and divorced by her husband. In comparison, the Iraqis lived freely without fear but they still suffered from order and systematic life. Therefore, Coe in this novel wants to illuminate his readers to the fact that sometimes when we decide to make any decision, we have to think carefully about how such a decision would affect the life of other people.

#### **4.3. Melissa Ben: One of Us (2008)**

This dramatic novel represents the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. The novel begins with Ben Caldor, the leading political journalist, who meets a woman named Anna Adams at a cafe in London. Caldor tells the story of her brother Jack, a peace maker and political activist. He sacrificed himself as an anti-war interventionist against the war in Iraq and later found to have committed suicide. In ambiguous circumstances, the political authority in England accused Jack of mental illness and they covered up the truth. Therefore, Caldor wants to defend and honor her brother Jack, she also stands against those who want to mislead the truth. Anne tells the press that her brother is a symbol of a noble and unidentifiable identity. However, Jack writes an email to Caldor entitled *The Fog of War*, where he promotes the noble role of Norman Morrison who sacrificed himself in the Vietnam war to stop any armed forces. Thus, Jack resembles himself with Norman Morrison whom both seek a noble case. Below is Jack’s email:

*“In a society where it is normal for human beings to drop bombs on human targets, where it is normal to spend 50 percent of the individual’s tax dollar on*

war, where it is normal...to have twelve times overkill capacity, Norman Morrison was not normal” (257).

In fact, Jack believes that any form of empire in the world is dangerous and it represents evil, particularly the USA. In addition, Jack thinks that the events of September 11 are views that have been created to invade the third world. He was extremely upset about the Iraq war, thereby, he torched himself in Downing Street:

*“What they could be sure of was that within seconds he had doused himself with the entire contents of the can of petrol, found turned on its side minutes later, then flicked open the square head of a small lighter and torched himself alive...So, ithe- Jack- ran in the direction of Parliament, cars swerving and people screaming. Women covered their faces with their hands, then lifted the weight of their heads very slowly, fingers spreading; this, after all, their only chance to peer at unmitigated horror. To experience war. Men stared open-mouthed, muttering to themselves, soundlessly” (247).*

It becomes obvious that what Jack wants in his life is to build a world that is founded by respect, non-violence, repression, and harmony. His behavior was idealistic, where sometimes he disagreed with what his family or parents believe. For example, he always tells them that he hates liberalism and capitalism because they symbolize evil and exploitation.

It should also be noted that the political philosophy of Jack adopts the morality of political thinkers like John Rawls and Immanuel Kant. Actually, those thinkers believe that nations are friends. However, they refuse real politics, power, and the realist school of international relations. Both John Rawls and Immanuel Kant believe that if states do not follow the restriction of laws, many nations will be prone to injury and death because of the wars between them. Effectively, Rawls argued that: *“Human rights are a class of rights that play a special role in a reasonable Law of Peoples: they restrict the justifying reasons for war and its conduct, and they specify limits to a regime’s internal autonomy” (79)*. Similarly, Kant also adopted this view atop his categorical imperative moral philosophy of *“Duty for Duty’s sake demands that Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (qtd in Walker, 2012: 135)*.

Therefore, the story of Jack evokes the sense of dissatisfaction and fright of what Blair’s government did in its foreign policy to lead a USA-coalition to occupy Iraq. More importantly, the heroic stance of Jack embodies how an individual could sacrifice himself for the purpose of sending a message, by telling the world the danger of such mistaken foreign policy towards other states.

In summary, this novel explores the catastrophe that befell on Iraq and how the outcome changed the life of the occupied people. In general, the fiction allows readers to understand how the self-sacrifice of Jack's character influences the feelings of thinkers and writers to find out the truth. Thereby, this fiction thematically exposes the false foreign policy of both the British parliament and Blair's governance concerning the intervention of Iraq.

## 5. Conclusion

In light of the aforementioned analysis, the study reaches the following conclusions:

- 1) In the first novel, Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, readers are introduced to the protagonist Henry Perowne and his daughter Daisy who view the conflict differently. McEwan's novel is useful to understand how British politics at this time divided people into two fronts; either for or against the use of armed force. Each front had their own moral, ethical and political justification for their opinions. For example, Henry Perowne sees the war in Iraq as a necessary lesser evil to end dictatorship. But Daisy believes that regime change and war violates human rights in itself. Therefore, this novel draws on some norms in international relations theories and analyses trends such as regime-change and humanitarian interventions. McEwan's *Saturday* is useful to understand these norms and how they can be related to national security of those countries that intervene.
- 2) The second novel, Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle*, narrates the story of its main character Paul, an MP during the Blair's labor government who resigns from his post due to his unease over voting for going to war. The novel illustrates how the hawkish politics of Blair's Labor government and its handling of foreign affairs was viewed, challenged, and critiqued by some politicians and public opinion. Additionally, closer reading detects the drastic effects of foreign intervention mainly on personal and political lives of British people on the one hand and to a lesser extent on the Iraqi people on the other.
- 3) The last novel by Melissa Benn, *One of US*, reflects on how the intervention in Iraq affected two British families. The politics of intervention leads to a disastrous and shocking tragedy for one family and presents a challenge to a Labor politician. The novel stresses on the theme of anti-war activism and the campaign for peace. It exposes how the government manipulated public opinion, covered-up the truth, used a mixture of defective intelligence, and nascent thinking to justify waging the war.
- 4) In their representations of the war and Britain's experience of it, McEwan advocates the invasion of Iraq but Coe and Benn critique the legitimization of the interventionist discourse as necessary and reject the narrative that such

intervention was legitimate or inconsequential. They vindicate the argument that intervention and aggressive military actions have disastrous consequences such as destabilization and armed resistance.

- 5) The examination of the three British novels reaches the general conclusion that the invasion of Iraq affected British culture, particularly within novels that were deeply involved in the dominant rhetorical debate used to justify the war on terror and the subsequent invasion of Iraq. These novels determinedly describe the resort to war in language that evokes the tenets of anti-war and anti-interventionist debate. Thereby, they cast the Iraq war as an inappropriate, unjustifiable response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, and not a humanitarian intervention mission. It is interesting to understand the pervasive symbolic impact of the US-UK-led invasion of Iraq on the cultural consciousness of Britons.

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