

GEORG MEGGLE

Thoughts on the War on Iraq

translated by Beatrice Kobow

0 Introduction and Preliminary Remarks
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0.1 Concerning the current War on Iraq, again, the most important question is: What is the meaning of this war? What does it mean to us? Which function does it have from the point of view of those who plan, start and lead it? What does it mean to the people in Iraq, what to those in the Middle and Near East? What is the relevance of this war – already looked at by some as a turning point of world history – for the rest of this century?

0.2 These are monumental questions – too great to really be answered by a single person. Nonetheless, we are not allowed to evade these questions: Not as a societal collective; nor yet as individuals. Because: The answers we give determine which role we play in this war, voluntarily or of necessity. At the same time we may learn a lot about ourselves in thinking about these questions again. Maybe also something about what to do better with the next war, in the next round of the announced wars.

0.3 It would be wrong to think that these questions of meaning should be left to be answered by future historians alone. For what else do these scholars do – for the purpose of better understanding in a context hopefully more readily and fully accessible to them than to us today – but account for our present views and actions in retrospect? But even if we could see the future and look up the books of these future historians: What would it help us if there was written only that we, no different than most generations before us, didn't ask ourselves earnestly the question about the purpose and meaning of a war?

0.4 Yet, that's not how it is. Since February 15th – since Saturday, February 15th, 2003 – we know: Should future historians really have this opinion about us, the present-day people, they would be wrong. On this day, on all continents more people than ever before in the history of mankind took to the street together for a single goal – why? In the end only for one reason: All the explanations of the purpose of this war had not convinced us.

0.5 Our future historians would be better advised to ask themselves the following question: Why was it that in the year of our Lord 2003 the War on Iraq II happened despite the immense global opposition?

Let us not wait for the historians. What is our own answer? Well, I do not know YOUR answer – and therefore, I am eagerly awaiting our discussion after my talk. What would be my answer? This is my topic today.

1.1 Our present position has been compared by some to the situation immediately preceding WWI. This comparison is meant to be a warning and a reminder of how completely unpredictable and unimaginably horrible wars and their consequences can be; and thusly this comparison was probably intended well. It is still wrong. We do not *slip* into a war right now. The War on Iraq II was planned from the beginning – long-term and grand scale. That – as the officer in charge of this war announced daily until the end – nobody wanted this war, that was simply a lie.

1.2 The planning was, in addition, an open one; this war is *not* the product of a conspiracy. The pre-debate on this war and on the new strategy which legitimizes this war, on-going since the 1990s, was led not only in closed circles.

The planning of this war fulfilled the democratic criterion according to which each person who wanted information on the debate was able to inform themselves – or more accurately: *would* have been able to inform themselves. The involved think-tanks posted their options–sketches and geopolitical blueprints on the internet; the speeches, memos and discussion results were published in newspapers and magazines; the „bible“ for the involved masterminds, Zbigniew Brzezinski’s small volume “*The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*“ was available in stores since 1997 (and in German translation in 1999). Further, timed exactly with the beginning of the last showdown, for the first time in „real time“,ⁱ there existed a screenplay for the whole theatre of war: It was available to the German audience in excerpts in a four-part series in the magazine SPIEGEL. For a reading in the aftermath, I recommend the book “*The Threatening Storm. The Case for Invading Iraq*“ by former CIA-analyst and gulf war expert Kenneth Pollack. In my seminar *On the War on Iraq*, to be held in the upcoming summer term at the University of Leipzig, this screenplay for war will hold the center stage.

1.3 War-planners are, in most cases, not stupid.ⁱⁱ They have to figure all kinds of eventualities into their calculations; and on the green table they often do. Therefore, to the smartest political strategists of the Iraq-War II, even the global opposition to their plans was probably not a big surprise. (Most surprised by their prima facie success was the peace-movement itself; to believe in the chances of a *real* success would, of course, be incredibly unrealistic. Why did I, still, whenever possible, participate in these Monday evening demonstrations? I will gladly explain it to you after this talk.) The real questions for the future historians-guild and for ourselves can only be this: Why did the people planning and organizing the Iraq-War II in 2003 hold steadfast to their pro-war-decision, although they knew that almost the whole world would be against this war?

1.4 Probably not because they were war-mongers. Bush, Blair, their planning staff and the many think tank masterminds are no criminals, that is no ordinary criminals in the terms of criminal law. No, I believe their case is far worse. The perpetrators do not have the slightest consciousness of guilt. On the contrary: They are completely, entirely convinced of the rightness of their decision. If Blair says, for example, “I passionately believe“ (that this war is necessary and therefore justifiable), I believe him; I believe him that he believes – yet, I cannot help but find the relationship between *belief* and *passion* in his „I passionately believe“ rather

strange – as opposed to i.e. *I passionately want and desire*. Declarations of war are not declarations of love. Or are they? *Anyhow* – I am more afraid of moralists like Tony Blair once it comes to war than of those allegedly cold-blooded calculators of the Pentagon. By the way: I know that most of the American generals did not want this war; once again it is the politicians who haven't learn anything from the history of mankind. One more book-recommendation: Read Barbara Tuchmann's "Die Torheit der Regierenden" (The Foolishness of Those Governing).

1.5 But, once more: Why are the Western initiators of the War on Iraq II so rock-steadily convinced of the rightness of their decision to wage war? Even after February 15th 2003, in full knowledge of the anticipated world-wide resistance against this war? What's the reason for them to still hold to this decision?ⁱⁱⁱ Why is it that – as the newspaper ZEIT put it fittingly on January 30th 03 – „the auto-pilot of this crisis was set from the beginning to war“?

For an answer, we have to look at the most dangerous software on earth: the software that steers our war-decision-relevant judgements – ethics. Again this time it is the ethics of the West. I will concentrate now on the ethics-software *made in USA*.

2 The Iraq-War from the perspective of the US

These piloting factors of the American mental war-software have to be differentiated in three levels:

- 1) general control factors
- 2) factors which are induced by the September 11th context and finally,
- 3) Iraq-case specific elements.

2.1 General Factors

First to the general factors: Those particular factors are, at the same time, those most immune to revision. And among these factors, we can distinguish two types: Factors, on the one hand, which are thought of as so self-evident that they function as *a priori* principles of the piloting software. Secondly, a number of additional assumptions no less decisive. Let us look to the *a priori* principles first.

A *A Priori* Factors

2.1.1 The way the US treats Iraq is only as special case of how the US deals with the world. Which role does America play on this planet in its own perspective? Which geopolitical tasks does this country presumably have?

These questions sound innocent. But only if you listen to them with the ears of an American. For an American the presupposition behind these questions – that his country *has* a global mission – is not in question. It is only open to interpretation what this mission is. "We have a mission." is the *first America-a priori*.

2.1.2 What is America's mission today? What is this nation willing to fight for? The answer can be found, stated briefly and clearly, i.e. in "*What We're Fighting For*", a public declaration in which about 60 American thinkers voted for a real (and not just a metaphoric in the more general sense of struggle) war against terrorism in February 2002. At that time they were still deliberating on the war in Afghanistan. America is fighting, according to these thinkers, first and foremost „for the American values”.

The *second America–a priori* is: the mission is a fight for values.

2.1.3 The third *a priori* is included in the second. Explicitly stated it is: the Mission of America takes the form of a fight. That is, looking at other cultures, not self-evident or trivial. Why not a mission by good example? That's not for America. America's strengths, many say – and not only Americans themselves – is owed to the fact that this country has guts, that it is aggressive.

The American fight for its values means at times, necessarily war: “At times it becomes necessary for a nation to defend itself through force of arms“, so the first sentence from the preamble of "*What we are fighting for*". Taken by itself that is not yet something so special; most likely most nations look at it that way. But then, still in the preamble, stated a few lines down, it says that not only self-defense is at stake, but more: '*We fight to defend ourselves and to defend our universal principles.*'

2.1.4 All three *a priori*s taken together equal what is called, in this war-manifesto, the “core of the American identity”: America's mission is to fight for American values, and, if necessary, to go to war for these values. America's wars are also mission-wars. Old-fashioned one could also say: America's wars are Crusades. Bush's first words after September 11th were no slip of tongue.

2.1.5 So much for the core of American belief. In this context, war does not mean only civil war. (Although, as our Leipzig-colleague Dan Diner points out in his book “Understanding the Century”, America's wars largely have the character of extermination-battles because the country's concept of war is shaped largely by the experience of its civil war.) War means outside of civil war, in the American understanding of its mission, predominantly external war.

This precisely follows from the fourth *America–a priori*, according to which American values *are* identical with the values valid for *all* people, or, respectively, in case they are not identical, they *ought to become* identical. I am quoting once more from the same, comprehensible source: “‘American values’ do not belong only to America, but are in fact the shared inheritance of humankind, and therefore a possible basis of hope for a world community based on peace and justice.” (Note that the Inheritance Foundation is, among interest-groups supporting the globalization of American values, not only one of the most conservative; it is fair to assume that it is globally the most influential.)

American values should eventually be or become universal values. Thusly, American values fit together (factually or ideally) with the general human rights. Good – yet, one can from this deduce vice versa:

War and struggle help approximate the ideal of a world in which the general human rights line up with the American values.

2.1.6 This universality–postulate added to the core sentence of American belief – is *the* motor of the American expansion politics. One cannot understand American geopolitics if one does not recognize this motor. The American world power has one first goal: the universal governance of human rights. Everything America does in this world is, measured against this first goal, only a means to an end. (Do not forget: I solely talk about how America looks at the world and itself.) All actions of America are finally only instruments in realizing its first goal. This is true especially for America’s wars. All wars of America are, in its self–understanding, in their ideal type finally wars of humanitarian intervention. No country in the history of mankind until now has led as many wars – as many wars in different places.

2.1.7 What these American–universal values are is scarcely described or elaborated upon in the declaration “*What We are Fighting for*”. It’s better that way: The central values quoted there – freedom, equality, dignity – can, as we all know, be interpreted extremely differently. And where universality is the goal, the spectrum of interpretation should, indeed, be restricted as little as possible.

So far on America’s *a priori*s. I do not want to problematize them today.^{iv}

B Additional Factual Assumptions

2.1.8 The America– *a priori*s become truly explosive, even in the most literal sense, only in conjunction with a series of further factual assumptions. I will focus only on those we need for understanding why America’s decision to wage war on Iraq from America’s point of view follows consequently. Therefore, this decision cannot be weakened by worldwide protest.

The first two additional assumptions deal with making concrete the central values “freedom” and “human dignity”. The rest are dedicated to a closer definition of America’s relationship to the rest of the world.

B.1 Clarification of Terms

2.1.9 Everybody knows *the* symbol of America: the Statue of Liberty. This statue not only symbolizes the liberties which, following the example of America, were example for the glorious French Revolution. (The statue of liberty is, by the way, a gift of gratefulness from France to America.) This symbolic figure is also placed exactly in the right spot – concerning the American understanding of *freedom*: off the Southern tip of the isle of Manhattan, in the harbor of New York, the trade center of the new world. Just bare minimum knowledge for someone who tries to understand today’s world is also: *Freedom* means in America’s software primarily *freedom to exchange goods*, in short: freedom of trade. Talking already with an international level in mind – the freedom of markets.

America’s wars for freedom are, as a rule, trade–wars, wars to achieve freedom of trade. (Thereby understanding freedom of trade, again in the American context, as little restricted as

possible by governmental influence). The US's model for globalization adds to these wars only one further terribly effective weapon: the instrument of geo-strategic economical war. (The differentiation between military and economical warfare becomes more and more artificial – soon one can hardly distinguish which side is instrumental to which.)

2.1.10 The second additional assumption begins with the American central value of *Human Dignity* – also exemplified by the points made in last year's war-manifesto – and ties it via the Kantian ban on instrumentalisation (you remember: never treat a person only as means to an end etc.) in a rather far stretch with what? Of course with *the* Western success-product: with our *democracy*. “The clearest political expression of a belief in... human dignity is democracy.” (S. 2)

B.2 America's Special Position

America's vision comes into focus: First goal of the American mission is: Realizing the universality as well as the freedom of markets as well as the democratic form of government. Beautiful? Let's assume so.

But why should the realization of this vision be specifically *America's* mission? Let us look at America's own reasons and here again only at those most relevant to today's position.

2.1.11 Reason 1) “Who else?” Only America is able to do it. Because: Reason 1a) Only America is willing. This again depends on two things. On 1b) Only America is optimistic enough to believe that the vision can be realized. And of course 1c) Only America has the necessary (financial, material, cultural) resources.

2.1.12 Reason 2) concerns America's geopolitical self-understanding – and would hold even if one would abstract from its mission outlined above. Reason 2): America or chaos! That is the postulate of the Necessary (geopolitical) Supremacy of America, short: the NSA-postulate.

Behind NSA stands *America's (geopolitical) 'realism'*: the international community of states follows, once it comes down to it, still (and yet maybe for all times) the a-moral laws of a state of nature á la Hobbes. To prevent the world from declining into a war of all people against all people, there is internationally a solution á la Hobbes necessary: the global Leviathan, the strong ruler, alone can guarantee peace, order and justice.

America or chaos. This NSA-postulate follows directly from America's realism combined with the “Who else?”-claim.

2.1.13 Leviathan is not subjugated under anyone, not even under the law. The global Leviathan therefor stands even above international law. America displays this very self-understanding today to the whole world. Without scruples, like one should expect from Leviathan. Do you understand now? Do you see now why the word ‘empire’ is for America itself not a swearword anymore? Why it even calls itself that in the writings of its leading minds? And why in “*The Grand Chessboard*”, this American geopolitical chess-guide

already mentioned, the mastermind of this radically consequent Americanism, Zbigniew Brzezinski, calls America's allies openly its vassals?

2.1.14 Let me point ahead: Brzezinski not only delivered the most comprehensible blueprint for how the US-empire can achieve its vision of a realization of freedom and human dignity (that is: of a globalization of markets and regime changes without borders). This strategy is designed to hold for the whole 21st century – the New American Century – and includes the proposal to make “the economically vital region” at the Persian gulf “an American military base”. He also talks, in an almost frighteningly clairvoyant article (Welt, 12/24/02), on the topics of World Security Council and Iraq-war II: His thesis can be found already in the title of the article – “*America cannot take measures against Iraq without the UN*”. That sounds good even to old-European vassals. The text itself much less so. Because a title matching the article should read: America cannot take measures against Iraq without the UN *if it wants to sell this war as cleverly as possibly to its vassals*. The “cannot take measures without” is paying tribute only to tactics, not to laws or morals. These other two levels are not even accounted for. Clear now?

2.1.15 The following quote from the same Brzezinski-article does not need to be commented upon: “Finally this is not about Saddam Hussein, nor about the Iraq – none of the two poses a real threat to the world-community or to the USA. What is at stake in this crisis is rather the legitimacy of the global lead of the USA.” Will this war be fought only to extinguish any doubt about the legitimacy of this leading position? Then the meaning of this war would be plainly this: Leviathan shows who Leviathan is. If this is the meaning, then we know, why the empire prepares us in principle for a war on-end. In order to remain Leviathan, Leviathan has to show the world over and over, that Leviathan is still Leviathan. Without scruples. Only this way chaos can be avoided. That's just logical, isn't it?

2.2 Factors Induced by Contexts / International Terrorism

2.2.1 I do not know whether you noticed: 30 minutes into this speech – and one topic has not been brought up. (Not explicitly, anyway.) Nothing I have said so far on the one topic which is chiefly talked about by the empire and by its vassals; and – as the “emperor” himself would have it – is also talked about by the whole rest of the cowering world after September 11th: No word, yet, on the forms of international terrorism which are said to be connected to or really are connected with September 11th. Like you just saw: It is not necessary. Quod erat demonstrandum. The expansion of the empire works without it. But since and following and maybe aided by September 11th, the US-imperialist expansion works so much better.

2.2.2 Attention! No quick assumptions: I am only following the new American think-tank-jargon. Quiz-question for all engineers of Anti-Americanism and its hunters: Is it permissible for a non-American citizen to talk neo-American? But let us not forget our future historians. They will have a hard time. Do you think they will be able to put old NVA-or RAF-texts and neo-American NSA-memos back in the right shelves?

2.2.3 Since September 11th the external ‘defense’ of American values goes like clock-work. And only this defense interests me here. Now and in the following, this is only about the game USA vs. Iraq, as our media calls it with a finger on the pulse of all geopolitical sports

buffs. The tension rises unbearably. The world is trembling with excitement: When will the game start? Obvious, made clear by the fact that these questions reflect the reality of the staging of War on Iraq II as a megalomaniacal Hyper-Superbowl game –the internal effects are contradictory. Freedom, equality in the law, human dignity – excuse me?

2.2.4 Before we – together with many contemporaries – call this new game on the global chessboard of imperialism the beginning of a new time, a brief look back. Back to the most important break before September 11th. This caesura which was called by an author who became famous on the grounds of having used this phrase: “the End of History”. Wrongly so, as we can see now. The breakdown of the Soviet Union and the resulting end of the (at least dual) global multilateralism is only just the beginning of a new age, of the future for the New America. Or did the author mean just that: that with the supremacy of America the history, this annoying construct of Old Europe, was and should have been ending. The author himself tries to keep up with the speeding development: the title of his new book is “The End of Humanity”? What is that supposed to mean?

2.2.5 September 11th – BOOKTITLE – Nafeez M. Ahmed – What all changed that day! Most importantly for the purpose and meaning of the Iraq-war: the shock of this day and the continuing terror following this day made things possible which were unthinkable before it. The empire together with its vassals is swallowing facts now which they would have never swallowed before. For example Bush’s New Grand Strategy: the new National Security Strategy, presented to the public officially on September 17th 2002.

2.2.6 This NSS strategy has many aspects. The one most pressing for us is marked by the title of § V: “Prevent Our Enemies from Threatening Us, Our Allies, and Our Friends”. This title continues with “from Threatening Us... with Weapons of Mass Destruction”, but the content of the text is much more general. “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” In plain English: Enemies are already those for whom it cannot be excluded today that they might in the future develop a potential which allows them to even imagine themselves to be able to one day equal the USA. What does ‘dissuade’ mean in this context? In a primitive case the same as today. In an ideal case the knowledge of ‘the power of the United States’ alone should be sufficient. This of course only works if there is no doubt that the US will be ready and willing to use its power at any time. But did anyone ever doubt that after Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

2.2.7 If so, it should be apparent by now that America’s self-restriction after Hiroshima was only due to the existence of MAD – the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction, that is the software of mutual deterrent. With the end of the Soviet Union this self-restriction is not necessary anymore. Therefor: away with this historical burden.

2.2.8 September 11th also paved way for the long-missing definition of the new ‘predicament of threat’. America’s armed forces are stronger than the armed forces of the ten, maybe even 20 next-strong states. What does America have to fear? Why are these over-proportional military means still necessary?

The answer: September 11th. America has non-state enemies. And they have at their disposal no less destructive means than yesterday's enemies. Maybe the terrorists of September 11th (at least in the airplanes) had instead of weapons of mass destruction only carpet knives in their hands, but that can change with the next attack. "The United States must and will maintain the capability to defeat any attempt by an enemy – whether a state or non-state actor – to impose its will on the United States, our allies, or our friends" (S. 19) America has to be capable of keeping itself free from any attempts in coercion or blackmailing.

2.2.9 The greatest danger would be the combination of terrorism on the one hand and weapons of mass destruction on the other. This danger has to be eradicated by and with all means. All potential terrorism-oriented suppliers of weapons of mass destruction (WMS) have to be eliminated. And that before a delivery of those weapons has happened. Later would be too late. The logical consequence: America's new preventive strike strategy. This strategy targets non-state agents – and also, following the Israeli preventive assassination strategy, even single individuals; see for example the killing of the supposed Al Qaeda member (including his company) by means of a remote controlled drone in Yemen. At the same time they use this strategy to target states. This last argument in particular makes the up-keeping of a military apparatus, one globally capable of action, vital.

2.2.10 WMS – suppliers for terrorists are most likely the so-called villain-states. The preventive strike strategy aims especially at these kinds of states. Not all at the same time; but one after the other. Only after all villain-states have turned into democracies, this most dangerous source of terrorism has dried up. America's military machinery has many tasks to tackle.

2.3 Iraq specific factors

The War on Iraq II is the first test for the NSS, for Bush's Grand National Security Strategy on an inter-national level. (Concerning the other level: we just mentioned Yemen.)

2.3.1 Why is Iraq enemy No.1? For many reasons of which simply one would suffice to answer.

Remember: the Iraq-war is, in opposition to the public opinion in most countries, explanatorily *over-determined*. For those who ask at any one time for just *the* one explanation, this is rather irritating. I am, as you know, against this war. But I don't understand how the fact that the pro-war advocates cannot agree on one single reason for war could be an argument against this war. The war strategists themselves do not make this logical mistake. The smartest among them, again Brzezinski, have early on pointed out that this war would sell better in the media if one could officially agree on one war reason beforehand.

2.3.2 That didn't happen. Why not? There is, again, more than one explanation. Explanation 1: Among the war-strategists, the same reasons were not equally important. The Pentagon pulled in this direction, the State Department, at least in the beginning, in another one. Explanation 2: The war-strategists had one thing in common with the war-opponents: None of the arguments for war was really convincing enough for all or even the most important people at the same time. Explanation 3: The people who were looking for pro-war arguments

just had too many good ideas. Every argument that looked like it could sell the war ended up in the big bag of war justification. If this explanation is right, it would mean that the strategy to give a large part of the war preparation into the hands of people from the advertisement business backfired. Champions in soup-sales are not necessarily the cream of the crop among war propagandists. For once a conclusion which could gain general consensus: No more soup-sales-people next time!

2.3.3 Now just a small selection of the alleged reasons for the War on Iraq II:

- There are some open bills with Iraq.
- The best road to Jerusalem leads via Bagdad, Teheran and finally Damaskus.
- Iraq is geographically most conveniently placed in light of the greater geopolitical goals (i.e. greater independence of the OPEC, especially Saudi Arabia etc.)
- Saddam Hussein is *the* world's best worst villain and he is most convincing as an argument for war to the world right now.
- The catastrophic condition of human rights in Iraq – complained about by Amnesty International for years – would make an invasion of Iraq a humanitarian intervention. America again helps establish human rights with war; it thusly helps, despite malevolent rumors, establish the law of people.
- America simply has to show that its patience ends somewhere (at any rate: 12 years since the last war). Otherwise its role as Leviathan loses credibility.
- After Bosnia, the Iraq is the best proof that the world community is paralyzed without the lead of America. Especially Europeans finally learn this lesson.

Etc. etc.

2.3.4 One last argument. Maybe even the most important one to many strategists:

- The first NSS-test has to work out by all means to make further implementations of this strategy possible. The entire future of the American geo-mission depends on it. And that this first decisive trial works out is most likely with Iraq.

Because:

- (i) As opposed to North Korea, Iraq does not have atomic weapons, yet; otherwise we would not attack Iraq.
- (ii) And if it does have them, they are not functioning right now. (Why else would we tag along with those inspections, which are in truth highly superfluous? Just to have a better overview.)
- (iii) The country has had it. The people cannot go on. Our sanctions have been the optimal preparation for this war.
- (iv) There is no single people in Iraq. Grand fireworks with tremendous terror effect in the beginning – and the three rivaling groups (Sunnis, Shi'its and Kurds) will turn against one another and thereby save us a lot of trouble.
- (v) The Iraq is the country with the least back-up help in the whole Arabic and Islamic world. Only Syria's Baath-regime could be sympathetic. And even that is highly unlikely.

2.3.5 We shall go only thus far in discussing what purpose this war has for America. You yourselves know what other questions need to be asked to keep this picture I've painted from being so fixated on America: Which purpose does the Iraq-war II have for the rest of the

world? For the Iraqi people? For the Kurds? For Turkey? For Tehran? For Europe? For the Arab world? For Eurabia? You will understand that I cannot talk about these equally important questions of meaning right now. You heard enough so far to know *how* I think about these things. And maybe we will see each other again, for example, next term in my seminar.

3	How about us?
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3.1 No. That was not the conclusion of my speech. Because there is one question I will not exclude. The most important one for us: What is the meaning of this war for ourselves?

3.2 Imagine you were in Bush's place. How would you have decided?

This question has two readings depending on whose preferences and beliefs you hold while sitting on the president's chair. Are you sitting in this chair with the beliefs and preferences of George W. Bush himself? Then you should simply adopt his name. Or, second option, are you the president, but with the beliefs and preferences you would have normally, outside of this nightmare? In which case you would not have to change your self to be in Bush's place.

3.3 The external parameters remain the same for both decision-making situations. Let's pretend that attack or retreat are the only two alternatives; let's look in both cases at the worst and best case scenario, respectively; and let's additionally assume that these best-or worst case consequences of War on Iraq would be the following:

ΩI *Retreat Worst case*: Continuation of the terror regime of Saddam; at some point in the next few years Iraq can pose a real threat by weapons of mass destruction; I lose the reelection campaign for presidency next year.

αI *Retreat Best case*: Saddam dies soon anyhow – no matter how; regime change in Iraq via riots or military coup; sooner or later I will get the Nobel prize for peace.

αII *War Best case*: End of the terror regime of Saddam; blossoming landscapes in all parts of Iraq; like dominos all states of the gulf region transform, in the long run maybe even the whole Arab or Islamic World is a world filled with democrats (*republican* democrats that is); former terrorists and we do fantastic trading in the global "suk".

ΩII *War Worst case*: Quoting Johan Galtung – and keep in mind that I (G.W. Bush) am, together with Condolezza and my other advisors, seriously thinking about this option – quote Johan Galtung: "It will end with the atomic bomb."

Choose now: *Attack or retreat?*

3.4 If you are rational, you will still try to circumvent a decision now – and ask your secret services and hopefully some other experts for further information. Clearly you will have to ask these experts concerning each of these possible alternatives: 1. How likely is this or that?

and secondly: 2. What can we do to make these or those consequences more likely or less likely?

3.5 I, *Georg Bush*, do, frankly, not think much of all this experts talk. I am not that dull. I know how this country runs. None of these people know anything more specific in the end. And furthermore most of these NSA or CIA-reports ordered by me is fake anyhow. And finally: Who of my advisors has the total overview? If you ask me: I rely on my instincts, in the end; I really did well relying on my intuition so far. The whole experts-fuss is only for our propaganda purposes. The rhetoric of the rational-choice- and game theories really sell these days. But what might be nice in theory, does not work – leading economists told me in a private talk the other day – does not necessarily work in the practice.

3.6 And if you now, again, ask me, *Georg Meggle*: I think our fictitious mirror image president is right. Just recently, I flipped through the memoirs of a man who knows “White House” business rather well from the inside: concerning his time in the State Department the Nobel peace prize winner and former Vietnam war-criminal Henry Kissinger writes (not quoting verbatim): Our think tanks were buzzing with people who were constantly talking about risk maximizing and minimizing, about probability-matrix-calculations and such things. But truthfully told – “ But, when it came to decision, we didn’t calculate – never”. I do not believe this to be different with Bush.

3.7 Therefor: Let’s be rational, let’s follow the president and admit: WE all really don’t know it truly in the end. What is left of our probability hypotheses? Probably nothing. And further: We have to decide under conditions of uncertainty. For decisions of this kind there is no general, no working criterion for all cases. Optimists orient themselves according to best case; pessimists according to worst case.

3.8 Back to the Oval Office. You are sitting on the president’s chair. And now decide – one word of you – and ...

3.9 I have made my decision: Retreat. The weapons inspectors remain in Iraq till the end of all days if necessary. That’s still cheaper than – and, after all, the members of the old anti-war-front will pay for these inspections, anyway, even if they will want to be reimbursed with their share from possible future oil-deals we might have with Iraq. No, but seriously: The decisive reason for my No to the war is the last Omega-case.

3.10 For my “No” there even is, in this special case, a not-so-implausible argument from the rational decision theory: If, in making a decision under conditions of uncertainty, the damage in the worst alternative case is incomparably larger than the gain in the best case, then should rather not be an optimist in this case. I am thinking at the same time: These are not, like most decision-making-theory-games, only bets with loss or gain for myself, no, in the war on Iraq there is more at stake, i.e. – in either case not rationality.

3.11 RETREAT! That would be my decision from the Oval Office of the White House according to option 2 – that is: I would be president, but still with my own believes and preferences. I did remain myself, in the end.

How would I have decided according to option 1? You remember: Same game, but this time I would have heart, brain and guts of Bush. The same question again: War or retreat?

3.12 I admit: Playing this option is rather hard for me. I am lacking a large part of the background necessary for this game. I – Georg Meggle – do support all four America–a prioris (of course only in their most general form). I am also a ‘universalist’ (that is: ‘ethics–anti–relativist’). I also believe that under certain, extremely dire conditions humanitarian intervention is okay. I am against racism and discrimination. I would be willing to die for certain liberties, maybe I would even be willing to kill in their name. And I, too, believe that we have to do more with our lives than what seems the norm in our “fun”–society of today. But with all American convictions which go further than this, I have tremendous problems – why that is? Maybe more on that another time.

3.13 Well: I am Georg Busch. You know my decision: WAR! What else? Each alternative would be worse. I have no choice. Saddam left me no other choice. He is, conclusively, guilty of all that follows and not I.

I know that you, honored guests, will not applaud my, Georg Busch’s, decision. But that is, ultimately, not my point. I ask only for your understanding. And with this I am addressing all peoples in the world, – explicitly – not only our friends. I ask all people of good will, I appeal to you honestly and urgently: Understand me! May God in his wisdom show you the right path, too.

But however you might feel about my decision, of one thing I can be sure: You will understand why I could not have decided otherwise.^v

Do you understand me? If so, I have reached my goal. To deliver this insight was the main goal of my speech today.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with a view on what is happening these days – with a quote from the writings of one of the best analytic thinkers concerning war^{vi}:

They change their words accordingly. Dull aggression counts as brave sacrifice, far reaching consideration as a guise for cowardice. Wild recklessness is called manliness, further consultation well–sounding pretext for rejection. He who screams and rages is said to be reliable; he who argues against, seems suspicious. Who levels an attack at some other person who just might be plotting is praised – and furthermore is praised who accuses someone else who thinks of no evil, of that same evil.

Quote from the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. A book on the moral decline of the superpower Athens. Thucydides. 400 B.C.

Thank you very much! Wa shukran, shukran ssa zi:lan!^{vii}

ⁱ Quoting Gideon Rose (editor of *Foreign Affairs*) on the back-cover.

ⁱⁱ One of their smartest moves is that they sometimes have a dummy elected for president, or someone who cleverly plays the dummy. Ergo: To mock the stupidity of a president is not a sure sign of one's intelligence.

ⁱⁱⁱ This climax has – for myself as well – a peace political point. That the war strategists were not surprised by our opposition is nothing surprising. Everyone could have known that. But what is the point of anti-war-demonstrations under this premise? Why was and am I still participating in Leipzig's traditional "Monday Evening"-demonstrations?

^{iv} Quiz question: Do you have reservations against these four American/universal a-prioris? In principle? My problems go something like this: Does, to pick a priori No.1 first, a country need a mission? Were not the happiest people those who did not feel like expanding? etc. etc.

^v Just to be fair: the same image could be decisive in both game-options. Like I (Georg Meggle) decided with the possible-war-worst-case-scenario in front of my inner eye, I still could as Georg Bush be pushed towards my decision by imagining the retreat-worst-case-scenario – now with American corpses. I (GM) still believe that despite identical images as decisive factors there is an important difference in their function. Maybe more in the discussion.

^{vi} The pointer to this quote I owe to one of the best FAZ – newspaper articles to this war: yesterday's contribution "A lost war" by Ivan Nagel (Nr.58, 3/10/03, p.33). Next to Kenneth Pollacks screenplay mentioned above, I will also make the old Thucydides reading requirement for my colloquium on the Iraq war in the coming term.

^{vii} This talk was organized by the Philosophical Institute of the University of Leipzig in conjunction with the Arabic-German House of Cultures (Arabisch-Deutsches Kultur-Haus e.V.) in Leipzig.

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