

How to do the right thing, the wrong way.  
Amnon Zohar – my own opinion.  
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Like it or not the war is on. Rightly or wrongly it is in the best interest of all involved that the war will be short and decisive. The victory is not really in doubt and therefore the United States and the world at large need to get beyond the Saddam regime and begin to assess the awful damage that has been done to our globe as a result of doing the right thing the wrong way.

There is no other way, as there remains no power in the world to force a cessation of hostilities and rescue Saddam 's regime. Prolonging the agony will be a sure way to fuel more hatred, escalate the cost of rebuilding and alienating international relationships beyond repair. It is time for the U.S to understand that even as the sole remaining supreme power in the world it may find it impossible to impose its will on the rest of the world without facing the consequences: rapidly escalating terror and the rise of Islamist fundamentalism to uncontrollable levels.

So how did this all come about? Here is the U.S waging for the first time a preemptive war against a nation and a regime it is bent on removing from power against the will of the entire world. How did we get here? It is the right thing to do! The world is in fact in danger of a catastrophic destabilization of its most strategic region – the Middle East. Since the end of the Cold War a power vacuum was created in the region. Having two superpowers neutralizing each other through deterrents thus making sure that other allied nations affiliated with either the East or the West remain in check does have its merits. In fact, ironically perhaps the Cold War provided a degree of stability to the world that cannot be readily replaced once there remains only one superpower.

What is the danger? First and foremost is the possibility of a unilateral interruption of Iraqi or Saudi oil flow to the U.S and to the free world for that matter. Without a stabilizing force in the Middle East to assert its leadership in the region there is present danger. There is an urgent need to avoid the distinct possibility of any rouge nation taking volatile action and turning the region into an inferno and world economy into chaos.

Why is it important to the George W. Bush and his administration? It is obvious that a regime change in Iraq will solve many of the U.S and for that matter the world's economic maladies. It will bring contracts to American oil companies, it will create millions of jobs, it will dramatically increase the flow of oil money and new investments to benefit America and Americans. It will basically solve the administration's true Achilles' heal the tanking economy for which the administration has no recovery plans or a realistic sense of direction. But most importantly it will make GWB a hero. Here is a war president with a vision for military victory followed by a major reconstruction spurring an economic boom. What can be a more perfect positioning for a slam-dunk re-election to a second term in 2004? If there is one thing that scares the daylight out of the president it is to become the "Second Bush not to be re-elected to a Second term because he forgot The Economy Stupid!"

So, if this is good for America, good for the Middle East, good for the World, why are we in such a mess and why is the entire world up in arms? For that you would have to go back to the fall of 2000 when the Supreme Court elected GWB as president of the United States. Here is a president who ran on a platform on American non-intervention in the world, who questioned the Clinton's administration excessive energy placed on achieving progress in advancing the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. A presidential candidate running on an election platform where the top national priorities were domestic. Health, Education, and, of course in the tradition of his father and the legacy of Ronald Reagan after whom he aspired to model his presidency, a huge tax cut.

Now elected and in office, guess what happens? The economy is tanking the Technology and Communications sectors are decimated, jobs are lost in the millions, the stock market looks like a train that lost its brakes rushing down a hill. In the famous words of Ronald Reagan: "The deficit? What deficit?" It's just running away. What is a poor president to do? A president who intended to delegate the running of the day-to-day affairs of the government to his capable and experienced lieutenant in the first place.

And then comes 9/11. It all changed on 9/11. Believe it or not 9/11 created an opportunity for GWB to frame his presidency by immediately, rightly and boldly declaring global war on terrorism. The absolute right thing to do! It galvanized world opinion. For the first time Americans experienced the horrific consequences of uncontrolled terrorism on their own turf. It generated a strong resolve and possibly for the first time ever a consensus among the permanent members of the security council of the U.N to fend off the most dangerous element facing the world today: the rise of Islamist fundamentalism and its use of terror to achieve its dubious if not evil means.

So now you have GWB as war president leading a global campaign to eradicate terrorism. If you look at the history of U.S war presidents, their popularity is pretty well guaranteed. And in fact GWB's popularity immediately soared. But, how do you fight a global war against terrorism? To most Americans war means "Green Pictures" on CNN, so how do you stage such a production? Well, the most logical target is Afghanistan: remove the Taliban regime which is clearly aligned with Osama Bin Laden and is directly associated with harboring Al Qaeda the source of the 9/11 terror attack. The entire world is right behind you "Green Pictures" flash on CNN, the works. When it is war Americans forget (for a while) and forgive you, even as the economy continues to deteriorate and spiral down out of control. The agenda shifted to war. War against terror. So you 'do' Afghanistan and then what?

A few options are excluded right off the bat. A global war on terrorism is a prolonged multi faceted, covert war. It's unpredictably drawn out, it's below the surface, it does not produce "Green Pictures" on CNN and most dangerously it brings back into focus the domestic agenda, that very same Achilles' heel that almost derailed the presidency in the first place. How about advancing the peace in the Middle East for a project? Well, having declared global war on terrorism, you are now precluded from taking charge of the Middle East peace process as long as the Arafat regime is in place and as long as

Palestinian sentiments are shifting toward the Hamas and similar terrorist organizations. In fact, until the Palestinian denounce terrorism and are capable of demonstrating its containment there is no role for the U.S to play in the region. So let's refocus on the general volatility of in the Middle East region. The region from whence the oil floweth. Let's dust off some old files. Let's settle some old scores. How about Iraq? With Israel being its only true strategic ally and to a much lesser degree pseudo allies like Egypt and Jordan the main threat to the region remains Saddam's Iraq or Iran. Iran has shown some signs of progress toward reforms lately, lowered the volume on Islamic fundamentalism and maintained a low key profile. So it must be Iraq. It sure as hell cannot be Saudi Arabia, way too early. So, Saddam became a target to be replaced by a regime friendly to the US. Why, because as already stated, it is the right thing to do!

Saddam's popularity in the global environment is at an all time low and it would be very easy to generate a consensus of world opinion that the gig is up on Saddam. In fact that consensus actually exists, even today, even in the middle of the war that the world totally rejects as a means to achieve an otherwise desired outcome. So what went so terribly wrong?

Justifying the first U.S led pre-emptive war is a tough sell to the American people and to a wide range of political constituencies. So there comes out the oldest sales trick in the book. As they say in Texas: "Let's throw some stuff on the wall and see if any of it sticks". We must disarm Saddam of Weapons of Mass Destruction, now, or face immediate and present danger. We are the leaders of the free world and it is our obligation to protect democratic values and liberate the Iraqi people from oppression. We cannot stand idle in the face of human rights violation. And by the way there must be a link somehow, somewhere, between Saddam and Al Qaeda even if we cannot prove it. And how about the well known sales tactic known as "The fear of god"? What if somehow WMD ended up in the hands of Al Qaeda which we are almost certain is in kahutz with Saddam and it was detonated on U.S soil? We must revert to massive military force as diplomacy failed for twelve years. None of that stuck in fact as the events unfolded, all of it just plain slid off the wall.

Why did it fail so miserably? Because it was not the truth it was a "spin". Lets face it is all about gaining a strategic position in the region through a friendly regime to the U.S and restoring stability and control of the oil flow. Besides, it is the perfect global economic fix. So how do you bungle so badly something that is so right for the president, the administration, the American people, in fact so right for most nations in the world if not all of them. How do you manage to do it in so wrong a way where you created hatred resentment, cultural and religious warfare that will take years, tens if not hundreds of years to calm down. This is where arrogance, poor diplomacy and the good old American attitude of "the world is a nice place but it has too many foreigners" comes into play and may be a few personal agendas of the strong and powerful. The U.S created a mess by underestimating the intelligence of the world community. People are not stupid most people understand why this needs to be done and they need to be told in as many words rather than being manipulated by spin and propaganda. Just tell us the truth and be

consistent. If you feel you have to, package it a little bit to make it more politically correct and digestible, but tell us and the rest of the world the truth.

It is quite easy and great fun to sit back and take pot shots at the president the administration and the U.S as a whole. The real question is how do you do the right thing the right way?

To some degree it is academic. The facts are what they are and one has to look forward and figure out how the world can be put together again and how to turnaround a terrible mistake by the US that may well cost the president not only his attempt at a legacy but possibly a second term.

Could the end been achieved by alternative means? Most definitely! The power of severely intensified economic, diplomatic and cultural pressure applied by the world community led by an East-To-West coalition of China, Russia, France, Germany, the U.K orchestrated by the U.S to bring the Saddam regime down could, would and should have worked. This pressure coupled with covert operations through collaboration of international intelligence agencies to remove Saddam would have worked. Seek him, find him, assassinate him and make sure someone steps in from the inside to take charge with pre-agreement between rival factions in Iraq to avoid an ugly civil war. It is not "Green Pictures" but it would have worked. Anyway it was not done and may be not even considered. So is that it? Let's just wait and see what happens? Definitely not!

The U.S must immediately focus, even now in the middle of the war on the post war reconstruction, on the rehabilitation of regions, relationships, people, infrastructure and to do so in a humble manner. Victory is already assured. It is now in the best interest of the U.S from a strictly economical point of view to make post war reconstruction a World project rather than a U.S burden. So the U.S must once again demonstrate leadership by inviting the nations of the world, the international institutions like the U.N the IMF and the like, to collaborate and cooperate in the post war rebuilding of Iraq, restoring peace and stability in the Middle East and mend fences with its traditional allies.

You proved the point. American supremacy and fire-power won the war. Now, in fact while the war is still being waged, mobilize the world community in multi national conferences, think tanks and summit meeting to genuinely convince the world that what started out as the right thing to do is still absolutely the right thing not only for America but for the world at large. Unless some humility and common sense is used to restore world order in the coming days, this one in the annals of history is going down as a perfect case study of how to do the right thing the wrong way.