

## **Why I supported the war in Iraq**

Zurab Tchiaberashvili

Even if I had no professional interest in the matter, I could not, as someone living in New York, avoid the issue of the Iraq War - especially here at the New School where I was among the few (if any) supporters of the war.

I should first confess that justification of the war is a losing position, morally speaking. Those who opposed the war preparations of the Bush administration were in a more attractive position. I am trying here neither to oppose nor to convince the war's opponents. I only want to explain to them, and to society, why I chose this "losing position."

Scholars of political science in the West have long discussed whether or not war in general can ever be justified. Even those who are most opposed to war, however, will admit that in certain cases war can be justified, most often by the necessity of self-defense.

The question, then, is the difference between a defensive and a preventive war. In the case of the latter, the danger should be a real and direct one. The argument of the war's opponents was that Saddam Hussein did not qualify as a real and direct danger; therefore there was no necessity for a preventive war.

In my opinion, the danger posed by Hussein is not only his alleged possession of biological, chemical, or nuclear arms. For me, the danger has more to do with the issue of "non-punishment."

Hussein was a dictator, and he must be punished for the crimes that he committed against his own people. The argument that Hussein was "elected" by the Iraqi people is irrelevant here: Slobodan Milosevich was similarly elected by the Serbs, as was Alexander Lukashenko by the Belarusians.

It is the principle of sovereignty that enables heads of states to oppress their own or other people without consequence. When the international community turned its attention away from issues of sovereignty and towards issues of human rights, however, dictatorial regimes lost their primary defense. Dictatorial regimes thus began to look around for new guarantees of safety - and they found them, in the production of biological, chemical, or nuclear arms.

Before the Iraq War, the international powers were unable to effectively combat this process of arms development in dictatorial regimes. My primary motivation for supporting the war in Iraq was the idea that the government of the state should not be the only body benefiting from its own sovereignty. A state's sovereignty is the property of its citizens, and this sovereignty should ensure the freedom, not the slavery, of each citizen.

The regime of Saddam Hussein was already so inhumane that it had to be punished. I understand that the word "already" will annoy many people. Where is the boundary of patience? How many Kosovar Albanians had to die to make Europe take action against Milosevich? When did the regime of Saddam Hussein become insupportable? But politics does not always have such concrete answers.

After this, the following question arises: If Hussein is to be punished, who will punish him? This was the question raised by France, the United States' main opponent in this debate. France did not oppose, in principle, taking action against Hussein. However, it did not want Hussein punished by the Americans, but by the UN.

My argument is not against France, but against the cornerstone of the current world order - the Security Council of the UN. The UN could not answer the challenge of Saddam Hussein. In fact, Hussein used the situation created by the confrontation between the permanent members of the UN Security Council to his own advantage.

European protest against the war was based on fear - not the fear of Saddam Hussein, but the fear of reinforcing the United States in its role as "Global Policeman." I, too, see this danger. The solution, however, is not to sabotage the United States, but to change the existing world order. It is impossible for the UN Security Council to carry out its functions, for example, when one of the members possessing veto power (Russia), is accused of providing aid to Iran's nuclear program, and when the same country plays an important role in the development of programs in Iraq.

Thus I believe - and this is my main argument - that the existing international order actually provides the conditions for the possibility and the necessity of further wars, to a much greater extent than the possible temporary hegemony of the United States. A true international force will exist only when the UN and other international organizations are comprised by democratic governments from all the world's nations, and such a force will exist only when the number of democratic states increases.

The continued rule of Saddam Hussein and the arguments of the war's opponents hinder most of all the reformatting of the current world order. Nowadays, the battle is fought for this purpose.

*Zurab Tchiaberashvili, political scientist and journalist from Georgia, is an Open Society Institute Fellow at New School University and an associate of TCDS.*