



The War Zapatero Wanted to Lose

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José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was very interested in the war in Iraq and hoped it would go poorly. Today he remains extremely interested, but especially interested in its failure. Peace in Iraq is not important to Zapatero.. The war unfortunately is. After all, the war helped him become the leader of the opposition to Aznar's government and permitted him to continue his criticism of the American administration. The war has allowed him to strike again and again against the paralyzed PP, which remains helpless to fight back.

It is understandable therefore, that he continues his attempts to ignore the progress which has been made in Iraq in the past months. Instead, he continues to emphasize the almost non-existent civil war there, the terrorist violence, the problems of the lower classes, which are always attributed to the Americans, and the old debate on whether or not American intervention was on the grounds of Saddam Hussein's supposed arsenals of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In maintaining his position against this "illegal, illegitimate and catastrophic war, Rod-

riguez Zapatero hopes for profitable results in domestic-political ends. Now, on the 5th anniversary of the start of military intervention, his discourse has become more and more feeble even though few dare to question it, both on the Left and the Right.

In order to clearly understand the why, the how, and the when of the war in Iraq, as well as its complete process of development up until today, it is necessary to remember some basic matters.

1. The Confrontation with Saddam didn't begin in March of 2003

The international community, not including the United States, already had been experiencing a war, the war of 1991, against the aggressive politics of the Iraqi tyrant. The war brought more than a decade of sanctions and embargoes when Saddam refused to fulfil his obligations and allow UN inspectors to certify his complete disarmament.

2. In November 2002, the Security Council approved a new resolution

regarding the disarmament of Sadam, their seventeenth.

This was not just any other resolution that would fail to be fulfilled as those preceding it. In the text, in its spirit, it was perfectly clear that it would be the “last chance” given to Sadam regarding the subject of weapons of mass destruction. It would not tolerate a game of cat and mouse with the UN inspectors. They would certify his disarmament in an unmistakable and immediate way. If he would not act as such, the international community would do so for him.

It is possible that the UN had never before passed a resolution with language so strong and clear, with the support from all members of the Council. This resolution discussed the obligations of Iraq and the consequences which would result if the obligations were not met. Its language was clear. There were no hidden messages. It said what it had to say. The UN had never before explicitly authorized the use of force; it had always referred to it elliptically, as is reflected in the resolution of 1441.

In a grave political miscalculation, this was not considered in this case. The end result was a consequence of Tony Blair’s domestic need for time with his reticent party. Looking for a resolution rather than justifying the decision domestically, served more to the field of critics of the war than the absence of a 1442 resolution. Many sought grounds to delegitimize the 1441 resolution. This was more than sufficient cause for what happened in March 2003.

3. The war was based on a just and legitimate cause. The real dishonesty lies is the accusation of their dishonesty

regarding the WMDs, which claims they exaggerated, or lied, about the presence of a threat in order to create a more convincing *casus belli*

It is important to remember that the debate regarding the existence or non-existence of Sadam’s arsenals only unravelled when they weren’t found. What’s more, leading up to the intervention, at the end of March 2003, the debate took a turn, not regarding the existence or non-existence of the arsenals, but rather regarding the best and most prudent way to disarm Sadam. In Parliament, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero asked for more time so that UN inspectors could carry out their work: to look, destroy, and certify the destruction of these supposed arsenals, which Sadam also admitted, remained in his possession, and would have great consequence.

4. The intelligence was wrong, it’s true. However, it was because of its own merits, not because of political directors’ deceit.

To sum it all up, what they knew about the past of Sadam, what they didn’t know about the present and what they assumed about the future, left them with a reasonable theory that accepted Sadam’s capacity to develop chemical, biological and nuclear arms (in distinct grades of maturation), and it was prudent for them to assume that he had them. The CIA, KGB, MI6 and French intelligence, as well as the Cesid/CNI all did the same. Now we know much about the failures. However, five years ago, none of the alternative explanations could account for the anomaly of Sadam’s behaviour with sufficient force and consistency so as to verify or nullify assumptions. These assumptions regarded the whereabouts of the

weapons operations since '95, when it was demonstrated that the Iraqi tyrant continued developing biological weapons.

On the other hand, why would they lie? On one occasion, David Kay, the first leader of the group searching for Saddam's weapons, told me, "I accepted the position and went there to find them, not to return home saying we had been wrong. But we were wrong."

It has to be said that although they didn't find the arsenals they were hoping for, Kay came across a large amount of evidence demonstrating the ambition of Saddam, which suggested all his technical and scientific capacities were ready for reactivation once he had been liberated from the sanctions. Anyone who wants to read the two thousand pages of Dr. Kay's information is welcome to try.

5. The WMD weren't the only reason to overthrow Saddam.

It was the necessity to make it known that the UN resolutions would be carried out. It was a moral question of helping a population to liberate themselves from one of the cruellest and most destructive dictators we have ever known. They believed that changing the ruling regime in Baghdad and permitting freedom to flourish there, would cause everything to change in the Middle East. It was the war on Islamic terrorism and the fear of the role Saddam could play if powerful enough and free of constraints. It was also the sanctions, becoming more and more vulnerable, and an embargo that barely stood, and which, for more inri, only affected the Iraqi population, and not the regime.

In March 2003, the options were clear. Either the international community would obtain what they demanded legitimately, or Saddam would continue on his own. In the post-9/11 context, this second option was completely unacceptable for global security, as well as for the Bush administration and its allies. The risk of not acting was perceived as much worse than that of a possible military intervention.

6. It is important to underline the moral argument in favor of the war, because the Left always attempts to keep it hidden in the format of its debate.

In 1991, at the time of the first war contract with Saddam, the idea of helping a population of a third-world country, facing political genocide was not yet developed, neither in practice, in political conscience, nor in public opinion. It was the product of successive concrete cases. It started small after the war and even then only in Northern Iraq, with the protection of the Kurds. Later however, as we all know, it continued in the Balkans, East Timor, and to a lesser degree in Africa.

There is no doubt regarding the atrocities committed by Saddam Husein and his followers, nor the suffering of the people. Saddam is the only person to ever have used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Why is he allowed to continue working with such habitual cruelty and despotism?

Following the Christian tradition, a war is just if it contains three basic elements: Just cause and intentions, just and proportionate methods, and a result that allows for just peace. At the time of the decision, I believe that just cause and intention were present. The

bellicose methods employed have always been limited and proportionate: they tried to reduce the hurting of possibly innocent people.

When violations of this norm became known, those involved were taken to court and convicted. Abu Ghraib, for example, did not go unpunished. Regarding the third condition, the result of just war, reference must be made to all that has happened in the last five years and the prospects of the future.

7. The biggest failure of the Americans has been their lack of foresight regarding the situation post-Sadam.

It is possible that this was inevitable. In Iraq, several wars have overlapped. Upon their intervention to overthrow Saddam, a war orchestrated by global jihadists, as well as sectarian and ethnic violence between the Sunnis and Shiites were also being fought. The American strategy and view of the war failed to adapt rapidly to these new-found realities.

The first theory of war, that of Donald Rumsfeld, consisted of deploying the minimum amount of soldiers necessary, putting in place a police force and an Iraqi army in instalments as brief as possible. It also suggested going to Iraq when the circumstances were most feasible (but in all cases, as soon as possible). It was a doctrine which employed force to carry out an overthrow of the regime rather than a change in one, as we have seen.

Today we know what we could not have known five years ago. They assumed that after the destruction of Saddam's pyramid of power, the rest would play itself out naturally and there would be no need for a more

concrete plan. This was not the case. The damage caused by the decades of massive social destruction had left an administrative void and complete inefficiency, corrupt from top to bottom. Also left behind, was a social fabric, fragile as smoking paper, which was, unfortunately, extremely accustomed to depending on orders and acting out of fear. Many have criticized Paul Bremmer's decision to disband the Iraqi army, but in reality, it disbanded on its own.

Even worse, it seems, is the initial decision to not interfere with the troops which did as much damage as the looting of the first days. Overall, they seemed to be there merely to insensitively observe the chaos, rather than to resolve it. Regarding this matter, we must consider the "gift" Saddam left the new regime, with the release of all the country's prisoners. Some 100,000 prisoners flooded the streets, imposing his violence. In the long run, they became accomplices to the terrorists and insurgents, kidnapping and killing for money.

There were more than sufficient troops to carry out the plan Rumsfeld and the Pentagon hoped for. However, if they chose instead to employ a strategy of directly fighting the Iraqis, insurgents, guerrillas, and terrorists, the amount of troops would have been extremely insufficient. What they lacked were combat units and troops. This became abundantly clear with the failure of Operation Together Forward in which the Americans found themselves ironically, alone and overwhelmed. The strategy announced by Condoleezza Rice of "cleaning, maintaining, and creating" focused on the elimination of the threat from followers of Al Qaeda. It was unsustainable and impractical in

light of the opposition from determined Sunni and militant Shiite groups.

Beginning in 2005, the sequence of successive elections, the approval of the Constitution, and the imposition of a new government, all contributed to the second strategic error of the United States. They wrongly believed that political progress would forever put an end to the violence and grave security problems.

It is important not to discount the political achievements which have taken place. We must remember the images of the bluish fingers of the millions of Iraqis who risked everything by going to the polls to vote. However, we must recognize that severe challenges still exist. With the bombing of the Dorada Mosque in Samarra, in February 2006, the ethnic violence was accentuated to the point that the explosion of another civil war was greatly feared. In spite of everything, this was fortunately not the case. However, in any case, it seemed clear that the lack of security put a clear limit on what could be achieved in the political environment, each day more sectorial, not to mention the material and economic recovery.

8. The domestic debate in the U.S. offers a good explanation of why military strategy wasn't changed earlier.

Just as in Spain and the rest of Europe, many Americans found Iraq, a hopeless case. The Democratic Party, in an act of irresponsible suicide, declared a lost war, and sought a unilateral withdrawal, which was anticipated by many. Some argue that this entire situation was something that had to be resolved by the Iraqis themselves.

A large portion of the establishment fails to understand the role of Iraq regarding global jihadism and the dramatic consequences resulting from a hasty retreat before the main objective of intervention has been achieved: a stable and free Iraq. These consequences affect not only Iraq, but the entire region, the war on terror, and the American security.

Bush is caught between those who prefer a failure in Iraq in order to serve their own military and political interests, and those who do not want to fight in a guerrilla war at all. It is strange therefore, that he brought forth a new strategy. This demonstrates the political merits of compromise and the bravery of this American president. At the end of 2006, the Baker-Hamilton commission suggested to him that he attempt a gradual retreat and a reduction in the number of troops deployed in Rumsfeld's army. Bush opted to do exactly the opposite. He revalidated his commitment to a free and safe Iraq. To do this, he increased the troops in the theatre of operations and changed his tactic for fighting the violence. He put a great theorist of counterinsurgency, General Petraeus, in charge of the new strategy and ordered that he go in June 2007.

Much has been said regarding this *increase*, as this new strategy is known quite commonly. Although it was essential, there was no increase in the number of American soldiers in Iraq. Instead, a collective and permanent intervention by American *and* Iraqi soldiers took place. The intelligence improved and the collaboration of locals increased substantially and qualitatively. The new image of compromise and victory produced a better political

understanding among the different factions.

9. The Spanish press, especially television news, as well as Rodríguez Zapatero are the only ones who continue to argue that Iraq is laden with chaos and that it would have been best to have never gotten involved (as if life under Sadam was paradise.)

The information that has been gathered in recent months, suggests that conditions in Bagdad and the rest of the country have been greatly improved. The violence has decreased, in all aspects related to Al Qaeda as well as the sectarian. This has upheld the third theory of war, which says the political puzzle can only be solved with the generation of greater security, that only with direct collaboration of the Iraqis can a new order be built, and that only with at least a reduction in violence can urgent and necessary economic reconstruction of the country be insured.

In these past five years, Americans and Iraqis have sought a strategy and appropriate means of power to be victorious in the war. Clearly, if they had accepted Zapatero's argument stating that violence continues to be so widespread, that it is impossible to even prevent a car bomb from exploding, victory would have been impossible. However, realistically, (after all, here we have bombs and assassinations, and Zapatero continues to claim we live in a paradise) this accepts that terrorism may always exist to some extent. However, the elimination of ethnic conflict has been achieved, dream-like, and brought with it a greater amount of tolerance. Victory is indeed possible. In fact, it is more than possible; it is extremely probable and can be

achieved in a reasonable amount of time: months, not years.

10. Many lessons can be taken from this war. However, we must not let ourselves stop there. Above all, we must avoid drawing incorrect conclusions.

There are those who rightly handle Rodríguez Zapatero and his entourage of infantile Leftists with confidence. They have also had a significant effect on the complex part of the Right which lacks ambition.

Thus, the situation in Iraq in no way demonstrates that the project of democratization in the Arab world is merely dangerous wishful thinking. What it does demonstrate is that in any case, it is difficult to establish a democracy under the pressure of various terrorist and guerrilla bullets and bombs. The Iraqi democracy clearly has its own enemies, from the followers of Bin Laden to those of Sadam, and those of Tehran. I, however, do not like to mention these, because this is exactly what our government does in order to avoid contributing to the improvement of Iraq.

Moreover, Jihad continues in Iraq and continues to be a threat to us. However, with our defeat, the jihadists will be victorious in feeding the perception that we are easy prey.

Even more, the preventative action or use of force has not stopped in Iraq. The demand on intelligence services increases. These things are much more complicated than one could imagine. Paralysis and failure to act is something that only some leaders, such as the Spanish president can allow themselves. Iraq will not be the last Ameri-

can intervention or the last war in our lifetime, whether we like it or not.

11. Rodríguez Zapatero has done everything possible to complicate the situation in Iraq

As I have said from the very beginning, the Americans most likely see Zapatero as having been completely humiliated by Bush. This is the view of

even their domestic enemy, the Partido Popular. His entire framework will collapse when the Americans win this war. After all, Rodríguez Zapatero is not the one hindering their victory, which will come triumphantly, bringing peace and liberty to Iraq.

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