

**Conversation in 2002 About the Looming Iraq War and the World's Situation,
between H., an American, and Evelin Lindner**

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This following conversation was carried out in 2002 between H., an American, and Evelin Lindner. It begins with H. writing to Evelin on the first anniversary of 9/11 2001.

Message from H., 11.09.2002:

Evelin

It is a very sad day for all Americans--and for the world. Nothing, even perceived humiliation justifies these acts. My office was in the World Financial Center, across from the WTC. I lost many friends that day, including one at the Pentagon. Thank you for your thoughts.

H.

Reply from Evelin, 12.09.2002:

H.

Thank you for your kind and sad lines.

I agree, nothing whatsoever justified that! No grievance and no perceived humiliation. I would like to have a world where nothing justifies violence altogether (hurting the physical integrity of any individual or group, what would be your definition of violence?).

Let me try to describe it. I just read about French history and about the Salic Law (written around the time of Clovis, 476-496 AD) that replaced personal revenge and paying for crimes (200 sous for a murder, for example, just as I know it from Somali clans even today). There seems to be a historic transformation to take retribution for violations away from the micro-level (family, individual) to a more macro-level of society (police, courts, etc.), and to a more nonviolent handling (no torture anymore). I also read about "jus cogens" that has changed over time, reflecting a worldwide abandonment of such practices as slavery. What is your knowledge of these transformations?

So, how could a global village look like that made these steps, similar to introducing a Salic law or enlargement of jus cogens?

This would be my goal:

I would wish to construct a world where violence (hurting the physical integrity of any individual or group) is not necessary, even not for the defense against crime. Defense should be designed thus that it is achieved at early enough stage, before violence is necessary, and is, when necessary, carried out without violence.

I wish for a world

1. that has overcome structural disadvantages that were brought about through unfair global tariffs, through corruption, or lack of transparency, etc., and that lead people to despair who would like to be industrious and see constructive outcomes of their efforts. If fair global rules and institutional structures were achieved, this would dry out potential support for humiliation entrepreneurs who advocate violence as a redress for disadvantages. It would furthermore take away the excuse of being disadvantaged from people who wish to cover up for their own failings by pointing out their victimhood (as I understood many African-Americans seem to do, or a number of women, etc.).
2. a world with globally implemented early warning, prevention, and policing rules that make “self-defense” for any individual, group, and country superfluous.
3. a world with definitions of human nature that support approaches of respect that do not break down people in the false assumption that this is “good” for them.

What is your view?

How are you doing? What are your current occupations?

E.

Reply from H., Thu, 12 Sep 2002:

E.

Interesting thoughts. But how could they apply to the real world in which we have the likes of a Saddam Hussein. I was at the UN for the President’s speech this morning. Before him, Kofi Annan spoke and even he scolded the Security Council and General Assembly for not carrying out their responsibility to enforce their authority by allowing SH to defy all 16 UN resolutions over the past several years. “The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those, who in times of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.” How to deal with one who defies all international authority?

H.

Reply from Evelin, Thu, 13 Sep 2002:

H.!

Thank you for your message!

I followed Kofi Annan’s and the President’s speech live on BBCWorld (ordinary Iraqis not, they are not allowed to have satellite dishes!). It was very interesting! Would I have seen you among the audience if I had looked more carefully?

You wrote: “Interesting thoughts. But how could they apply to the real world in which we have the likes of a Saddam Hussein.”

Let me try to put words on my reflections:

I think, firstly, two crucial words are “war” and “policing.” Iraq requires effective policing, not war, I believe. We find ourselves at the transition point towards One unit, One global village, as opposed to several “villages.” As long as nations consider themselves as separate entities, they wage war against each other. War is not waged, however, within a healthily functioning nation (in a healthily functioning nation there is no civil war either, the use of the word “war” in “civil war” indicates exactly the wish to split a nation).

Within a functioning country, police should keep up the authority of the law against violators (a certain number of people who disrespect the law will always exist, I believe, even in the healthiest social environment). Policing is not war, even though weapons may be used and the violators may be brought behind bars by force.

Therefore, the choice of words such as “War on Terrorism” or “War against Iraq” speak the language of the past (which is confusing and should better be avoided, I suggest, war-language is a divisive language, while “policing” is a more inclusive language; better than “war against enemies” is to use the label “police protection for all;” people who envision the future as One global village governed by law, would delete the word war from their vocabulary and stick to “policing” instead).

And clearly, at present, President George W. Bush in some ways makes exactly the policing case, namely the case that America should save the world from a Hitler-Saddam and be the global village’s policing force. If the world agrees, this is more than perfect (policing is an expensive endeavor, difficult to pay for, and where would Europe be today if not the United States had literally saved it from Hitler?). If the world does not agree, however, there is a problem.

Why is the world hesitant? Europe needed to be saved from Hitler, because Europe was too slow and hesitant in seeing and combating the danger. It seems that even today there seems to be this difference: America for action, Europe for waiting. And Hitler’s example suggests that the United States was right. Action is necessary, waiting is not good enough. However, the big question is which action?

Hitler was the result of two mistakes:

Mistake 1: not enough prevention, he was allowed to get into power, he was not stopped when he still was insignificant, and the danger was not taken seriously early enough and prevented

Mistake 2: not enough force when it was too late and he was in power.

If mistake 1 had not been made, there would not have been any option for making mistake 2.

Thus, mistake 1 has to be avoided first.

This means that at first action is necessary to make sure that mistake 1 is not being made. And here my research has its place. I believe that mistake 1 is made continuously and that

at present Hitlers/bin-Ladens/Saddams are allowed to emerge with an enormous carelessness.

The world is hesitant as to war on Iraq because there is the danger that it exacerbates mistake 1 instead of avoiding mistake 2. That is the only real problem, I would say. Nobody likes Saddam (except his likes). The Iraqi people suffer terribly since a decade. They should never have been brought into that situation. It is a shame. The international community has to prevent such suffering in the future; otherwise nobody in this community has any moral justification to be called “civilized.” There is all reason for action. A decade is much too long already! Action is long overdue. However, again, the question is which action?

Why are some people worried that “War on Iraq” could exacerbate mistake 1 instead of avoiding mistake 2? Because they see Saddam in a larger context. Saddam is firstly not the only current problem in the world, and secondly, his removal may lead to a worse scenario.

How could these arguments be evaluated? One could say that it may be so that Saddam is not the only problem; however, it is clearly stupid to leave the Saddam-problem unsolved just because he is not the only problem. Secondly, his removal may lead to a worse scenario, but what about not removing him? Perhaps this would even be more tragic?

I would conclude that inaction is the most pressing danger. However, it is the overall world situation that has to be improved; removing Saddam is by far insufficient. The world’s overall situation is too dangerous for just shooting at one target. The boat, our planet, may get a hole and sink. We should rather make sure that the boat is reinforced. In short, I believe, the overall situation of the world is much more dangerous, or in danger, than President George W. Bush and his supporters are aware of. And because of this danger, concentrating on Saddam is insufficient. President George W. Bush said in his speech something along the line that closing one’s eyes for the danger that Saddam represents, is closing one’s eyes to evidence. I fear that President Bush himself does not see that the overall danger for our world is much greater than he believes, sad as it is.

I just watched the BBCWorld *Hardtalk* interview with Saxby Chambliss, United States Congressman.

(From the BBC website: “America’s intelligence experts were too hampered by bureaucracy to have any chance of stopping the events of September 11th. That was the finding in America of the House Sub Committee on Terrorism, which examined the intelligence failures of the CIA, FBI and National Security Agency. Congressman Saxby Chambliss authored the report. He is a strong supporter of President Bush’s planned Department of Homeland Security.”)

Chambliss says that a new mindset is necessary for the FBI and CIA and all the other agencies active in prevention of terrorism. In the past and still now, he says, everybody working in these agencies protected his or her turf. He made clear that the new mindset

calls for everybody to work for the common goal, irrespective of whether one's name is made prominent or not.

I believe that this is also the lesson for the world: A new mindset, set upon the common goal of the global village, is necessary. We cannot allow any continent, country or nation to descend into tyranny and exploitation. Tyranny and exploitation have many adverse effects, not least that they feed feelings of humiliation among ordinary citizens who may rise violently, or worse, that these feelings may be instrumentalized by humiliation entrepreneurs who subsequently threaten the entire world. This is too costly for all. This has to be avoided. It is not a problem of the United States; it is a problem of the global village.

At present there are two scenarios being discussed around the world (I describe extremes, anything in between is currently being discussed):

1. President George W. Bush proves to be, and is seen as, the hero who helps the world put Saddam Hussein out of office, on the background of President Bush's intention to protect the well-being of the planet, to show good stewardship of the global village, an intention he proves to be true by allocating necessary resources not only into putting away dangerous regimes but also into implementing a more sustainable world.
2. President Bush is seen as the macho, who needs a success and does not care whether the planet goes down as long as America survives (protecting the "freedom" of the rich to stay rich by exploiting the rest).

If the second evaluation sticks in the heads of people around the world, the world is in greater danger than before. This is the Marie-Antoinette scenario (you remember the story?). The rich aristocracy being careless and un-empathic, busying themselves with eradicating competitors, over the bodies of and without caring about the innocent people who are in the fire line and suffer. The result, in France, was revolution and the guillotine for the rich aristocracy (equivalent to the rich West today). This is the case I fear most, namely that the rest of the world feels so humiliated by the rich that it falls for an upcoming Super-bin-Laden. If the second evaluation sticks in the heads of large enough amounts of people around the world, Osama bin Ladens may multiply faster than any CIA can follow. Then it is not any longer a war against some mad terrorists that is at stake, or one bad regime, but an all-encompassing war between the West and the rest. Then the word "war" would be valid again, because the death of the West would be the aim. Two camps would fight for survival, and, as Chambliss said, it is extremely difficult to protect yourself against people who are prepared to blow up their own bodies with yours.

So, we'd better avoid this all-out war. Therefore it is so important that the United States makes scenario 1 credible. President Bush has to take utmost care in not only speaking about putting away Saddam for the good of the world, but also to speak about how to help build a sustainable global village. Only then his good intentions are credible. I watched *Hardtalk* with Paul Barker, see notice further down from BBCWorld: "President George Bush recently vetoed an aid bill that would have provided much needed extra funding to Afghanistan." Listening to this interview was quite depressing. Afghanistan's

build-up needs much more support. If this is not forthcoming, it may again descend into warlordism and drug production and all the other evils we saw before. I fear that the first mistake that Europe made with Hitler, namely that prevention was neglected is made again.

I would summarize that more “action” must be put into prevention, because if that is achieved, post-hoc reactions, when the madman has managed to grab power, may be much less called for in the future. What you call “the real world” would then be a different place as compared to today’s real world. The question is how much this “real world” is malleable to human influence. Obviously, humankind managed to outlaw slavery and similar practices, so, what is the next step? We do not fall victim to robbers at every village’s outskirts anymore, except in countries like Somalia or Afghanistan. Countries like Somalia or Afghanistan face the task to become more “civilized,” however, perhaps the entirety of the global village also needs some new strides towards “civilization”? If yes, which strides? This is where my work is located.

I am personally more American than Americans, one could say. Europe is too rigid, I believe, it is accustomed to live in long-lasting structures and underestimates the potentials lying in action and innovation; America, on the other hand, may focus too much on narrowly targeted action. I believe in action that is broad and preventive.

It seems that at present there is a problem with “feeling in the world” that is not shared. I had a conversation with Morton Deutsch just recently. I wrote:

The coming together of people in the Global Village is inherently difficult, I would say, and it would be strange, if it did not create friction. The murderer is most often a member of the family; in other words, passions are stirred up as soon as one moves closer together and forms a family, or, in case of the global village, a “village.” It is therefore that feelings such as humiliation get more salient, I think, at a personal level.

As long as people were far removed from each other, their diplomats and elites engaged in Realpolitik. This clearly could bring about disastrous wars; and since feelings among citizens were largely stirred up by propaganda, and the validity of such propaganda could not easily be verified through people’s personal encounters across borders, a Hitler could succeed in a fictitious humiliation story being taken seriously, namely that the “Weltjudentum” or “World Jewry” was set to humiliate the world, and that therefore the world had to be “freed” from this danger.

Today, more and more people are increasingly touched, personally touched, by the coming closer to each other in this global village, something which infuses everybody’s desire for recognition, respect, acknowledgement, including humiliating disappointments of such desires, into what formerly were international relations reserved for diplomats and power-players. This is dangerous, I feel, but also hopeful. It can tip either way. The potential for every individual to feel humiliated as an individual can increase, but on the other side also the multitude of contacts increases that may mitigate too simplistic stories of humiliation.

Too many among the American citizenry are a little too removed from this process and this is perhaps the most salient problem. I believe that the rest of the world has acquired a sentiment of being a “Global Village” more than many United States citizens have....”

What is your view?

Warm thoughts to you!

E.

Reply from H., 14.09.2002:

E.

Thank you for your analysis. I was glad that you saw Pres Bush as really talking about policing, even though he used the word war. Policing is certainly what he has in mind, and the UN has utterly failed to backup its authority as global policeman in the last ten years. It is troubling to the President, as it should be to everyone in the world, to see the Iraqi delegation defiantly sitting there as the United States President describes how they’ve violated UN sanctions and resolutions for ten years. Why does it fall to the United States to take up the task of pointing this out and taking action? This is precisely the perceived role of an organization like the UN in the global village. Yet because of the rest of our global village’s willingness to be “free riders”, knowing that the United States will ultimately do what needs to be done in order to properly police a menace like Saddam, the United States must stand up and risk being criticized as unilateralists, imperialists, etc. Perhaps the other nations aren’t really viewing the world as a global village--otherwise they would have acted through the UN to enforce their own policing resolutions long ago. You can see, perhaps, why one could be suspicious that declaring membership in a global village seems sometimes to occur only when it’s convenient to do so. Amazingly, even Pakistan has not publicly said it would support regime change in Iraq. I believe they do, but Musharraf is concerned about inflaming dissidents in his own country. Well too bad--our President has stated his opinion clearly, even though it has caused a decline in his popularity within the United States because some disagree with him. And what of France’s lack of support--aren’t they one of the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council--shouldn’t they be embarrassed that the UN has been blatantly defied for so long? And hasn’t the United States rescued France several times in the last 100 years? So why do they sit back? It is still not clear to me that as many developed and developing nations as you would like to believe really want the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a global village, as opposed to the benefits of it for their nation when it is convenient. The UN’s inaction to Iraq’s lawlessness can’t be blamed on the United States--it is a failure of many other nations to take on their global villager’s responsibilities. So this is my view, and I think the President’s.

Hope all is well in Paris.

H.

Reply from Evelin, Thu, 19 Sep 2002:

H.!

Thank you so much for this long and kind message. Thank you for your openness. Please let me try to reply in a way that also helps my book writing. You know that I appreciate you highly and think that you are a more than great person, so it would be good if we two could create some kind of better understanding among us about global matters, so-to-speak as a miniature model for international relations. We both are well-intentioned, authentically wish for world peace, so, we should be able to find a common line of understanding that draws together the different camps that are now in dissent on the world stage. I think it is possible that we get there. And on the way we encounter all the arguments that also readers of a book would raise.

Your evaluations of the world (and President Bush's, as you point out in your last email) provide for quite an amount of bitterness on the American side: America being the savior of the world and – instead of being thanked – being let down and even accused. This represents an extremely unfair situation that warrants all bitterness that can be imagined. If you (as a representative of those in America who feel this), and the rest of the world (those who are unthankful or worse) were married and came to me as a therapist, I would say that you should take a year out, lead separate lives for a while and see after a year or so whether you missed each other to the extent that better communication could be brought about.

We Are Locked in a Marriage That Cannot Be Divorced

Unfortunately, while spouses can separate, countries, nations, neighbors in the global village cannot do that; we are all “imprisoned” on this planet with limited space. We do not have the luxury of “empty” continents anymore; even Australia is “full.” We are compelled to get along with each other on the limited space of this planet if we are to aspire to world peace. I know only too well the result if people do not get along under similar circumstances. I once spent half a year on a tiny island on the Azores, and saw how feuds can rage over generations in villages (not much evidence of a “golden age” there, as nostalgia's friends like to idealize the country life of the past). Or Norway, I remember two brothers on their farms up in the mountains, their farms being far away from the next neighbor but only a five minute walk apart. They communicated exclusively via their lawyers who were based in the next city. Even in winter, when snow could easily isolate those two brothers from the world, they would not communicate and help each other, something that could become life threatening. Quarrels over heritage had done that to them.

So, what do we do? The best solution, a time-out period of separation between America and the world, cannot be implemented; the two brothers could not just move away from each other for a while, the reason being that they made their living on land (that by definition cannot be moved). Similarly, the world's nations cannot move away from this

planet (of course the brothers could have sold their land and moved away, something humankind cannot do, unless we find another planet to inhabit).

What is the next best solution that is available if we wish to avoid ending up like the brothers in the Norwegian mountains or worse? How can feelings of bitterness be reduced, changed, mitigated, and transformed to the better? What would you propose?

Is Building Trenches a Good Idea?

You, America, President George W. Bush, could make the case that the rest of the world, instead of sulking, ought to sharpen their minds, get their act together, and realize that the United States point of view is the only logical and all-encompassing one. This would be one way of doing it. However, the world most probably would not appreciate such a suggestion; the world may reply that there is only one party feeling bitter and disappointed, namely them. In short, the situation would worsen instead of improve. Rifts would widen, not close.

What then? America could merely go on indefinitely with harboring feelings of bitterness without saying much; the United States could feel mistreated, retreat to planning action without much regard for the rest of the globe, and carry the world's responsibilities alone. This sounds almost like present reality as seen by many Americans. Is this a good solution? Even worse, I would say, for the United States to go around with bitter feelings without a way out to resolving them, abandoned with the impression of being left alone with the important decisions of the planet. For the sake of world peace, this deep valley of non-understanding should be brought to a more level situation.

What is your proposition as to how to solve that?

Is Understanding the Other's Viewpoints a Better Idea?

Clearly, both sides have to work on going beyond merely stating their positions and digging trenches. The aim must be to make all parties understand the others' perspectives in the spirit of communication skills seminars, where all sides are trained to step into the other's shoes and try to perceive the situation from different perspectives.

This does not mean that I have to agree with my opponents, however, it means that I try to grasp how others arrived at their stances. A good example is perhaps the corporate sector. I was told that once a Japanese car manufacturer brought a new car onto the international market, called "Fitta." This is a vulgar word for "vagina" in Norwegian and this car had no chance of being sold there. What was the Japanese company to do? They could lament over those stupid Norwegians, tell them that they should forget about their stupid language hang-ups and focus on the quality of the car. However, this strategy would not help them. The car would still not be sold. In order to sell it in Norway, in this case, the name of the car type had to be changed.

Or, Norway was to vote for or against membership in the European Union. Norway has had very painful experiences connected to the word “union.” Sweden once held Norway occupied, conceptualizing this as a “union” between the two countries, euphemistically, from the Norwegian standpoint. For Norway, becoming member of the European Union was to enter into occupation, this time under the tutelage of Germany, the strongest economy of the European Union, and this while Norwegian identity is largely resting on its pride over Norwegian resistance against German occupation during World War II. In this case the European Union did not change its name, and Norway stayed outside.

For world peace, I believe, we have no alternative as to get to some kind of mutual understanding. Just sitting in trenches is not good enough. What is to be done?

Why Am I Not More Detached?

Lone Hero?

If the United States and the rest of the world came to me as a counselor, being locked in a marriage that cannot be divorced, I would put the following task to them, “First make sure that you both authentically wish to get out of this bitterness and not maintain it.” In other words, I would suggest that the first effort both partners have to undertake is to examine themselves. Why? Because there are, as we all know, quite a lot of advantages with feeling bitter. To give just one example, feelings of grudge and bitterness bestow importance where there would perhaps be emptiness otherwise (“the lone hero,” “despised by the world,” is a much more interesting perception of oneself as realizing that one is a “loser”).

No Closure for Past Suffering?

Or, another example, such feelings allow a person to connect to past sufferings that were brought about in different contexts and had not been brought to closure (childhood trauma, for example, or stories of not yet redressed humiliation in the family’s or nation’s history). There are, as we all know, people who like to bath in feelings of bitterness and disappointment, accusing others of whatever goes wrong; the last thing they would wish to do is to let go of these feelings. Self-pity may be sought and not avoided.

The African-American I told you about, who habitually swindles people, is presumably filled with suffering from his personal life to the extent that he baths in feelings of bitterness wherever he can find them, and what is more convenient than the slave past of his people... He is a “brother” who, in his lifetime, will only focus on disadvantages for blacks, he will never acknowledge opportunities. He will seek to confirm his bitter feelings, irrespective of reality. Unless he changes that, there is no use of bringing him together with the opponent, who, in his eyes, is constituted of all whites.

Similarly, many an American may be caught in long-term bitterness and merely seek to confirm this. Twenty years ago I visited a family member of a friend from Norway. The man we visited was a great-great uncle or cousin of my friend and very old; he was about to die, he could hardly speak. He and my friend had never met in person before; the old man had not kept in touch with his Norwegian family since he had left at the age of 16; it was his American wife who had kept in touch with Norway. We entered the room where the old man was lying in his bed; the room was almost empty, there was only a large hospital bed with hospital equipment attached to it in the middle of the room. Clearly the man was very near death. When we came in, he did not say hello or good morning, he did not greet us at all, he did not even look at us. He uttered but one single sentence, slowly, with a deep voice, so that I still hear his voice twenty years later: “YOU DID NOT WANT ME!” His wife directed us away quickly, into another room. My friend was puzzled and bewildered. He had no idea what these words meant.

The old man’s wife had to explain to us that her husband was one of a flock of sisters and brothers in Norway, and since only the oldest brother could inherit the farm, he and the other brothers were superfluous. There was no other way to make a living either; Norway was extremely poor then. So, her husband followed his elder brother to the United States as an adolescent, and harbored bitterness towards Norway through all his life. He despised the world and loved America, both a little too obsessively, she said. Some of their children had adopted this stance, she said also. Their father’s bitter perspective on the world had become a “culture” for his children, an American culture with America written a little too large and the world a little too black. At first glance I thought that this resembled the xenophobia (fear of the unknown) that many people in many countries experience towards respect to the rest of the world, a basic human trait to be wary of the unknown. However, the old man’s wife said, her children were not afraid of the world because the world was unknown to them, no, they had learned that the world is quite known, namely as a place from which nothing good can come. This was their national identity and they did not wish to let go. Unfortunately, her children would be skeptical and not very interested to meet us, she said.

I told the old woman that I had just experienced a similar situation. I had interviewed physicians in Dallas, where I did an internship as a medical student. I told her how I entered the room, shook hands with the physician who had agreed to be interviewed, and started by introducing myself and doing some friendly small-talk. I asked him whether he had ever visited Europe. He replied, “Why should I go to Europe? I live in God’s own country!”

Later, during my years in Egypt as a clinical psychologist, I had many American clients and tried to understand their particular mindset. Yes, there was a very special trauma connected to being an American, a trauma similar to the one adopted children often have. Adopted children may live in the most loving and caring adoptive family, yet, there is a disturbing thought, “Why did my biological parents give me away?” At the psychological spot where we human beings wish for full acceptance from our forefathers, adopted children have a question mark. Perhaps the biological parents were too poor to feed another child and it was a hard but responsible decision for them to give away the child;

this would be the best explanation. However, what if the biological parents were negligent and rejected ME? The question mark's presence is deeply disturbing and unsettling. It is easy to overlook its significance; however it has its reverberations. It is imperative for such a child to detach from the uncertainty of the past and connect to the future, however, this is not always easy, and shortcuts, such as denial, are often chosen.

I once had a client who learned at her eighteenth birthday that her biological mother had been a prostitute. The girl had grown up in the warm and loving home of middle-class American adoptive parents. Her future was bright. However, instead of becoming a lawyer or doctor or happily married wife she chose to become a prostitute, deliberately. She told me that she felt that she had to search for her biological mother. Her life, instead of taking off, went down into misery. Therefore she came to me.

Americans are the adoptive children of the "best country in the world." They ought to be thankful. And they are. However, what about their forefathers? Why did they come to America? They left behind family and friends, and a homeland. Why that? The most current reply is that they did that because they faced poverty, rejection, or even persecution and extermination, either for their religious creed or their race or both; some others were perhaps mere adventurers. Some American citizens know more about their past, Jews know quite well which tragedy they escaped from, while others look back on forefathers from Ireland, Germany, Norway, mixed with native Indians or immigrants from the Philippines or other parts of the world. Thus, many question marks remain. What about my forefathers? Were they really among the strongest and brightest ones who came? Or were they the rejected ones? Why were they rejected? What is my identity in relation to them? The existence of the question mark is something that disturbs and must be coped with. This coping may be sound and mature, or not. I may choose to see the world as a bad and untrustworthy place that rejected my forefathers, and America as the only safe heaven.

Fear and Jealousy?

On the other side of America, on the side of the world, similar hang-ups may fester, and the terminology of the "ugly American" summarizes it. This term clearly enjoys deep resonance in wide regions of the world; otherwise it would not manage to be so well-known. What is behind this term? Which emotions feed it? Is it fear, or jealousy? The military might of the United States is many times the military might of the next on the list. This gap is unprecedented in history; it has never occurred before. Is it therefore fear that the world feels towards the United States? Fear of domination? Fear that the United States may abuse its superior strength? Or is it jealousy? Perhaps it is a mixture. However, is it wise to sit in trenches and feed on fear and jealousy? No.

So, the first task would be for both, the United States, and the rest of the world, to ask themselves honestly and thoroughly: "Do we cling on to feelings of bitterness? Do we search for excuses to maintain them? Are we really prepared to let go?" If we are not prepared to let go, no argument will reach us, we will always select the interpretation that gives us the opportunity to continue to feel bitter and disappointed, no matter what.

All parties should put these questions to themselves, in quiet. There is no need to discuss this in public, since this endeavor is designed to lead to quite difficult admissions to oneself. Perhaps, I have to admit to myself that I indeed cling to the past and do not want to let go even if this would foreclose building a viable future? Perhaps I do have to admit that I care more about redressing past grievances and wanting to see my opponents on their knees than about the survival of humankind? If such difficult admissions were in store, it would be easier for me to slip away from this task and accuse the opponent of precisely these shortcomings, instead of facing my own limitations. Open discussion of these matters may therefore be too difficult.

Interestingly, there are cross-cultural studies that are related to this point and indicate that cultural contexts that encourage people to cling to emotions for a longer time are characterized by more violence, or, in the words of these studies, “length of emotional experience” predicts homicide rates and other forms of violence. In short, the ability to detach oneself is a good thing if we wish to aim for peaceful social relations. To discover ones roots may be important, however, the tree can also grow new roots. Identity should better not be based too much on the redress of past grievances.

(See, for example, Bond, who is a renowned researcher in this field:
Bond, Michael Harris (2002). Culture and aggression: From context to coercion
(unpublished chapter, sent to me by email). In Spielberg, C. D. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Applied Psychology*. New York: Academic Press (forthcoming).

or

Bond, Michael Harris, Lim, Flora, and Bond, Mieko Kuchar (2002). Social and Psychological Predictors of Homicide Rates Across Nations: Linking Societal and Citizen Factors to the Killing of Others. Hong Kong: unpublished paper.)

Clearly, however, detachment should not be confounded with forgetfulness or letting the world end in chaos without me caring. Detachment is rather to be understood as the equivalent of cooling down, getting rational, gathering the inner maturity and balance that makes sound strategy and statesmanship possible, instead of shortsighted or lazy “politicking.”

I Need Self-Detachment for Balance and Maturity

So, one good reason for detachment is balance and maturity. There is a whole wealth of literature on “tunnel vision” and how hot feelings and the stress brought about by them may lead to less than optimal decisions. We acknowledge this in court. A passion crime fetches less punishment than a “cold” crime. We know that human beings may not do what is best for themselves and their social environments when passion overwhelms them.

However, while we may “excuse” a murderer who kills the lover of his wife because we “understand” how feelings can get hot, should we do the same with a dictator who hates the world so much that he threatens it with nuclear weapons? No, the “spillover” of his

hot urges for revenge would be too great. Or should we “excuse” a terrorist who is eaten up by passionate beliefs and fervently yearns to blow up not only himself but also his enemies and become a martyr? And what about superpowers whose citizens expect no kindness or sound reason from the world because they have a personal and collective history of feeling betrayed by the world, of harboring personal and collective feelings of resentment against the world, and who seek solace in holding on to quite a number of guns?

We have no option, since we are stuck on this planet with limited frontiers in a global multi-partner marriage that cannot be divorced, to get balance and maturity into all our decision making, particularly those decisions that affect the entire globe. No emotional “hang-ups” are admissible. They may be thoroughly understandable, just as ever before, but they are not any more excusable, tolerable, or allowable.

I Need Self-Detachment Because of the Infiniteness of History

However, there is another reason, I would say, namely the logical impossibility of handling past grievances justly. I found the following on the internet (at <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/textbook/events.htm>):

...the French agreed to help the Americans. A French army arrived in America late in 1778.

...

Though the peace treaty was not signed until 1783, the major fighting ended in July 1781. The British army was camped on a peninsula near Yorktown, Virginia. The Americans and the French surrounded the British army, with the French navy cutting the British off from the sea, and the Americans and the French cutting them off from the land. The British army had no choice but to surrender. The war was over.

In the Treaty of Paris, signed two years later, the British recognized the independence of the United States. The treaty also fixed the borders of the United States as the Mississippi River, Canada, and Florida.

Or, very interesting, the homepage of the Régiment de Saintonge (at <http://www.ai.mit.edu/people/sfelshin/saintonge/frhist.html>):

In 1781, the 85^{ème} Régiment de Saintonge and four other regiments of the French army marched south from Newport, Rhode Island to Virginia where they would join the American forces under General Washington and make the critical contribution to the final defeat of the British Crown forces at Yorktown. Today, we maintain the élan and esprit de corps that characterized these crack troops. Our faithfulness to that spirit has made the recreated Régiment de Saintonge widely known and respected both on and off the field.

In addition to the 85^{ème} Régiment de Saintonge, we also portray the 4th Regiment of Militia (Middlesex County, Massachusetts), part of the colonial forces that contributed to the defense of the colonies as a complement to the regular army.

This page is designed to introduce you to the 85^{ème} Régiment: its history and role in the American Revolution, ...

When I read this, I could start arguing that the United States have to do what France wants, because without the final help by France, the United States would not exist as it does today. France made the “critical contribution to the final defeat of the British Crown forces at Yorktown.” France could make the argument of parents who call upon their children’s obedience by saying that without them the children would not be there.

The United States could reply that they have repaid their debts more than amply during the subsequent decades, and that now it is time for France to come around and not be obstinate to United States wishes for support. In defiance, France could react with indignation and claim that they do not feel at all that the United States have adequately repaid their moral debts of thankfulness yet. Thus the quarrel about thankfulness could continue further and further. When should it stop? Who is to decide whose thankfulness is overstretched or not?

There is no logical solution to that. Perhaps my case is even more illuminating. Would it not be good if I called Germans to go to war against Poland in order to get back the land that my father lost fifty years ago in what was then East Germany? Why should I accept that my father lost his homeland? Yet, Poles would argue that they justifiably threw out Germans from these territories because Germans had ruthlessly occupied Slavish territory a thousand years ago. My question: Who is the owner of this land? Is Germany the legitimate owner because Germans lived there for the past thousand years until they were thrown out in 1945? Or is Poland the legitimate possessor, because they lived there before? Should I call for war? What is your view? Why should I not call for war? Don’t you agree that thousand years are enough to be able to say that one should not be thrown out anymore? Is there any excuse for throwing out millions of people from one day to the other? My mother is deeply unhappy that these territories are lost. She is deeply embittered that Poles believe what she regards as her home is now Polish land. She does not think that she should pay with her home for a Holocaust that she did not initiate. What should I tell her?

So, the second danger with clinging too much to the past is that there is no way to make just decisions. Where do you draw the line? Should I call for war? Who is obliged by thankfulness or guilt to help whom? France the United States, or the other way round? Mandela, when he walked towards the gate of the prison that had kept him for 27 years, opted for “forgetting” by saying to himself: “If I still hate them when I have passed this gate, they will have me also for the rest of my life.”

I Need Self-Detachment Because of the Attribution Errors

However, there is a third reason for why detachment is useful, I believe. As we all know, human nature is thus that we focus on those contributions that WE bring to the table and tend to diminish assistance that comes from others. We are all victims of the various so-called attribution errors. This means that I believe that my victories are due to my virtues, efforts and industriousness, while my defeats are due to adverse circumstances. Conversely, I believe the opposite about my opponents; when my opponents succeed, I believe that they had help from favorable circumstances, while their defeats are due to their lack of virtues, efforts and industriousness. So, these attribution errors lead each side to highlight their own contributions only. We humans are not made to be fair. The problem with that is that these attribution errors lead us directly into disappointment: We feel that our opponents do not recognize our efforts; on the contrary, they concentrate on their own virtues, positions, and contributions. We feel disrespected, unrecognized, passed over, disregarded, and overlooked.

What we need for world peace is detachment. We need the maturity and balance to play down past grievances and humiliations, and guard against overlooking the others' contributions.

We therefore have to learn to actively counteract three human tendencies (at least) that are detrimental to world peace:

1. feelings that get too hot and foreclose sound decision making;
2. clinging to the need to redress past grievances and stories of humiliation instead of designing the best future for all;
3. minimizing others' contributions and humiliating them by our disregard.

My research on humiliation enters into all three points:

1. when I feel humiliated, I react "hotly" and fall prey to tunnel vision;
2. past grievances are usually stories of humiliation;
3. and minimizing others' contribution inflicts feelings of humiliation on those others.

What Next

Armed with three caveats (against immature emotionality, against too much emphasis on past grievances, against minimizing others contributions), we now stride into today's minefields and try to disentangle them.

UN:

1. the UN were put in place largely by the United States
2. the UN cannot act without the United States (the UN are organized not much unlike any ordinary Golf Club; the UN are not a separate entity from its members)
3. whatever failings there are on the part of the UN, are also failings of the United States, because the United States are not outside, but inside the UN

4. the UN have no military force of their own that could go out and enforce security council resolutions
5. the UN have initially been designed to solve problems by negotiation and not policing or war

It seems that the world at present is caught in a Security Dilemma. I wrote the following earlier (2001) about the Security Dilemma:

In a context where the world is seen as guided by “anarchy” – anarchy as the “state of nature” (Hobbes, 1951) – the Security Dilemma is unavoidable: “I have to amass power, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared”... and thus an arms race and finally war can be triggered. Beverly Crawford explained (in her course “Gender, Conflict and Peace” at the Summer School on Peace and Conflict, July 20-25 1997, in Loccum, Germany): “Even ‘nice’ leaders or countries have to end turn traitor when the Security Dilemma effects a spiral of insecurity and preventative war. World War I illustrates how Russia mobilized troops, and Germany and Austria, seeing this, mobilized even quicker. Later Hitler wanted more territory to be more powerful than the allies who had ‘betrayed’ Germany before.”

Clearly, the Security Dilemma is a cruel dilemma, a dilemma that makes human beings appear “evil,” independent from any debate on nature (even “nice” leaders have to go to war). Combined with the “innovative idea” of agriculture that gave rise to the creation of empires, it pitted not only clan leaders but huge societal entities with massive capacities to develop gruesome weapons against each other. Hobbes may be correct in arguing that a “social contract” for the creation and maintenance of super-ordinate structures can tame this “evil.” However, this is difficult to carry out, exactly because of the forceful nature of the Security Dilemma.

Yet, the current trend of globalization – if understood as an increase of interdependence – may, at least in the long run, have the beneficial effect of weakening the Security Dilemma on a global and local level and facilitate conditions that lend themselves to the implementation of global and local social contracts, an effect that, indeed, is already beginning to be felt. Super-ordinate structures, though only just starting to be institutionalized at a global level, are in the process to form.

To conclude, if global interdependence, both imagined and real, at the level of institutions and cultural beliefs, indeed represents a push towards weakening the Security Dilemma, then humiliation, both in its traditional form as honor humiliation and as human rights humiliation, will increasingly become dysfunctional and immoral.

Global interdependence, the fact that there are more actors on the stage than states, and that people speak about what their intentions are, weakens the Security Dilemma. The Cold War was a full blown expression of the Security Dilemma that encompassed the globe. What we have now is an attenuated one, however, it is still dangerous: in short and simplified, the United States do not trust the world and vice versa. The United

States believe that those UN members who do not agree with United States evaluations are either misled or ill-intentioned, and the world believes that the United States are deaf and blind to the overall context of the world's reality. No side believes too much in the validity of the others' judgments.

.....

End of conversation.