

As soon as a state becomes aggressive - Hitler is the best example - it of course makes sense to defend oneself, and to liberate countries occupied by the aggressive countries. And if nothing can stop them, it even makes sense to try and defeat this country on its own territory and bring a regime change. Other situations that might justify the use of military force would be the fight against slavery, colonization or genocide. Democratization as such is not on this list. But if democratization is the goal of the Bush administration's foreign policy, why not start with the democratization of Saudi Arabia, which is an ally?

Q: Mr. Joas, you became interested with America because many German traditions, such as Catholicism and Marxism, have had difficulties in the era of democracy. Mr. Rumsfeld called Germany and France "the old Europe," after they rejected going to war with Iraq. Do you agree with him? Is America more modern?

A: No, that's ridiculous. If anyone deserves the label "new," then of course it would be the new political order that has arisen under the roof of the European Union. Germany, France and others intend to establish a new form of international order so that coexisting nation-states no longer are in the constant trap of a security dilemma. Over the last decade, Western Europeans have established institutions of cooperation on economic, political, and military levels, in order to avoid this Hobbesian danger.

Q: Many peace activists in mid-Michigan, as well as U.S. intellectuals such as Gore Vidal and Noam Chomsky, are calling the Bush administration fascist. Is America no longer the forerunner for democracy?

A: Through my German experience with "fascism," I would never call the Bush administration fascist. I am neither a pacifist, nor am I against military intervention in all situations. For example, I supported the intervention in Kosovo and even in Afghanistan. But I'm very much against intervention in Iraq. The United Nations has the right to intervene militarily if, for example, an attempted genocide threatens a population. But I cannot see that Iraq today is such an example.

Q: In your work, you try to explain social action throughout history through a framework of American pragmatism. What can the ideas of people like John Dewey and George Herbert Mead teach us about war?

A: They belonged to the intellectual forerunners of the League of Nations, and so they were very much in favor of mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution, in an institutionalized way. They were extremely depressed when America did not join the League of Nations after World War I. What I find particularly disturbing today is that, although the 1990s clearly brought an increase in the willingness of people to accept mechanisms of peaceful conflict solutions, the Bush administration demonstrates today that it doesn't take these mechanisms seriously. It just wants to use them as a means of legitimization. This weakens the United Nations.

Q: You write about the "creative" role of war. What do you mean?

A: I do not mean to say that wars are good. I just wish to point out how the disaster of wars, such as World War I, led to the establishment of new types of regimes in Europe, like Italian fascism or Russian bolshevism. If we go to war, nobody can really control what will come out of it. I do not know enough about the domestic politics of Iraq, and I cannot judge how easy such a war would be for the United States. It could easily be that there would be a regime change in other Arab countries, taking them in directions that are quite different from democratization. In the early 1900s, nobody would have predicted a thing like Italian fascism or German nazism coming up in the new century. So we cannot imagine which new types of regimes in major states like Pakistan, might develop in the 21st century.

Q: Are you also concerned about domestic consequences of going to war with Iraq?

A: All wars contribute to increased rigidity in domestic matters. That happened in the United States during the two World Wars, and then during the Cold War. On the other hand, I'm rather confident that civil society in the United States is strong enough that it will resist such a development.

Q: Germany and France are working on a new plan to avert war in Iraq by compelling Baghdad to admit thousands of U.N. troops, enforcing disarmament and tighter sanctions. Do you think this might work out?

A: Ask me one week from now and I can tell you more. I do think that if the U.S. goes to war without support from the U.N. Security Council, that this will have serious disadvantages for the United States. It clearly destroys part of the trust invested in the United Nations in some parts of the world, for example in Europe. It also makes the U.S.

government much more vulnerable if the potential war doesn't work out as planned.

First Annual Peace and Justice Studies Lecture. 3 p.m. Feb 14, MSU Wells Hall B-104.

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Lansing City Pulse (MI)

Date: February 12, 2003

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