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Trends. Time and Time for War

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses the concept of time perception pertaining to the diplomatic events leading to a United States-led military intervention against the Iraqi regime.

Beyond raw political ambition, the lust for and aversion to war, corrupt interest and self-interest, hypocrisy, ignorance, far-sighted strategic vision, noble intent, and the like is a significant place for time perception in the diplomatic events leading to a United States-led military intervention against the Iraqi regime.

How long was long enough for inspections? How long was noncompliance with United Nations resolutions before it was too long? How long were the estimates of the length of a war and its aftermath to be acceptable or unacceptable? How long ago were instances of political and military conflict that still were robust causal agents in the contemporary intrapsychic and behavioral functioning of world citizens, leaders, observers, and participants? How long is political memory as context for political perception and behavior? And how long would the non-appearance of desired phenomena have to occur before the quest for such phenomena might interfere with the art and science of politics?

There seem to be individual differences in time perception--much if not more than there may be cultural differences. Beyond the rationality, logic, and reason criteria related to decisions for and against war, the substrates of time perception would merit study among political psychologists interested in preventing as well as provoking war. (See Nussbaum, S., Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2003). Creeping dispositionism: The temporal dynamics of behavior prediction. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 84, 485-497; Pollmann, T. (1998). On forgetting the historical past. *Memory & Cognition*, 26, 320-329; Senot, P., Prevost, P., & McIntyre, J. (2003). Estimating time to contact and impact velocity when catching an accelerating object with the hand. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception & Performance*, 29, 219-237; TenHouton, W.D. (1999). Text and temporality: Patterned-cyclical and ordinary-linear forms of time-consciousness, inferred from a corpus of Australian aboriginal and Euro-Australian life-historical interviews. *Symbolic Interaction*, 22, 121-137.) (Keywords: Diplomacy, Iraq, Time Perception, United States.)