

The Switch: Metaphorical Representation of the War in Iraq From September 2002 – May 2003

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Abstract

In this article, I introduce the term *the switch* which I define as a rhetorical strategy using metaphor to enact a simultaneous two-way, semantic shift. While one thing is transformed into another, other things are transformed into the former element. The idea that such a metaphorical switch may operate in language first came to me while reading the English press covering the build up to the war in Iraq, and I have used a corpus of one hundred and fifty articles from *The Economist* to verify whether my first intuition had any basis. My working hypothesis was the following: When *The Economist* spoke of war, it transformed it into something else, e.g. problem solving, surgery or crime fighting. Meanwhile, business, international relations, eradicating terrorism, eradicating poverty and even pacifism were all conceived in terms of warfare. This paper posits that *the switch* proceeds by evacuating the meaning of one concept while importing it into another concept, which can from then on be framed and structured by this imported metaphorical framework.

In diesem Beitrag untersuche ich den Begriff der *Umschaltung (switch)*, den ich als rhetorische Strategie im Metapherngebrauch definiere, mit dem die Metapher gleichzeitig semantisch in zwei Schichten arbeitet. Während ein Gegenstand durch die metaphorische Übertragung in ein anderes Konzept überführt wird, werden andere Gegenstände in das erstgenannte Konzept integriert. Die Idee zum Begriff der metaphorischen *Umschaltung (switch)* entwickelte sich, als ich die aufkommende englische Presseberichterstattung zum Irak-Krieg las – der Beitrag basiert auf einem Korpus von 150 Artikeln aus *The Economist*, mit dem der erste intuitive Zugang einer Überprüfung unterzogen werden sollte. Meine Arbeitshypothese bestand in der Beobachtung, dass immer dann, wenn in *The Economist* über Krieg berichtet wurde, Krieg als Problemlösung, chirurgischer Eingriff oder Kriminalitätsbekämpfung dargestellt wurde. Währenddessen wurden andere Diskursdomänen wie Geschäftsbetrieb, internationale Beziehungen, das Ausrotten des Terrorismus und der Armut und sogar der Pazifismus in Begriffen der Kriegsführung erfasst. Ausgehend von diesen Beobachtungen postuliere ich in meinem Beitrag, dass die *Umschaltung (switch)* ein Mechanismus ist, mit dem der Bedeutungsinhalt eines Konzeptes getilgt, während er in ein anderes Konzept übertragen wird: Diese metaphorische Übertragung – einmal vonstatten gegangen – rahmt und strukturiert vorrangig von da an das neue Konzept.

1. Introduction

1.1 Politics and Metaphor

The importance of metaphor in political rhetoric hardly needs to be defended today though its use has usually been subject to great controversy. Philosophers have often stressed ways in which metaphor and other rhetorical strategies can be used to pervert the way we perceive things. Aristotle, though he posited that a mastery of metaphor was the greatest gift of the poet in *The Poetics* (1459a), stressed, in *The Rhetoric* (Preminger, 762), that metaphor was dangerous because it could be used to make a thing seem better or worse than it was.

Plato, who once envisaged a political career for himself and went on to have an immense impact on political philosophy and linguistic thought, framed many of his lessons on how the ideal political state should be founded and governed in allegoric terms using dice games,

chariot-driving, navigation and masonry as examples. When Adeimantus made fun of Socrates' inclination to explain his ideas by allegory, he admitted that he was indeed *greedy...for images* (488a). Ironically, however, western philosophy has tended to interpret Plato's expulsion of the poets from the ideal city (398a) as a denunciation of metaphor. And his mistrust of mimesis would seem to give some justification to this interpretation. At any rate, it was in aligning himself with this supposedly "platonian" tradition that Hobbes (1651/1985,102), almost two thousand years later, declared that metaphor meant using words in a way they were not ordained to be used so as to deceive people.

In recent decades, in contrast to this denunciation of metaphor as a tool of deception, there have emerged two camps which both present themselves as the defenders of metaphor. The deconstructionists (Derrida, de Man et al.) have argued that metaphor, as part of language, the necessary medium of philosophy, is inescapable. This is a premise that has led the deconstructionists into a rereading or "reading against" philosophy. In a somewhat less "negationist" vein, the cognitivists (Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, Fauconnier et al.) have challenged philosophers' mistrust of metaphor by arguing that it is constitutive to our conceptual construction of what we know as and what we speak of as "reality". The vast amount of research on metaphor which has elaborated the Lakoff and Johnson hypothesis (1980, 1999) that metaphors are things we live by (or rather, conceptual frameworks that we live within) leaves little doubt that metaphor plays an intrinsic role in the way we fashion our philosophies and the concepts which we work with. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced the term *protometaphor* to denote these fundamental conceptual frameworks (though they increasingly refer to *protometaphors* as *conceptual metaphors*).

„Conceptual metaphor“, Lakoff and Johnson argue (1999/45), „is pervasive in both thought and language. It is hard to think of a common subjective experience that is not conventionally conceptualized in terms of metaphor.“ They go on to argue that „conceptual metaphors are mappings across conceptual domains that structure our reasoning, our experience and our everyday language“ (idem. 47). This was a thesis which they had elaborated back in 1980 in *Metaphors We Live By* in which they argued: „Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphoric in nature“ (1980, 4). They posited that we could only understand metaphoric expressions such as *He shot down all of my arguments* or *Your claims are indefensible* by unconsciously referring to an underlying equation, or, as they put it, a *protometaphor* or *conceptual metaphor*, namely, ARGUMENT IS WAR (ibid.). They used the term *protometaphor* to stress the fact that the

expressions above were preceded by and derived from a former metaphorical equation. The term *conceptual metaphor* had the advantage of stressing that what they were talking about was more than a simple question of words. They thereby refused the limited notion of metaphor as a stylistic trope. When they stressed that *protometaphors* structure our experience as in the example *shooting down arguments*, they were arguing that

“we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and defend our own (...) It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing” (ibid.).

The hypothesis of these structuring conceptual frameworks, *protometaphors*, has been greatly strengthened by work which shows how concepts emerge from metaphorical mappings in what Fauconnier and Turner (2002, 17-38) have called “blending”, the fusion of certain elements of two concepts in order to allow the emergence of a third concept. Turner (Turner, 1996, 76-81, Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, 292-295) offers the example of the Grim Reaper which selectively maps elements of Death onto Harvesting to allow the emergence of a new concept to represent our idea of death. But blending is equally present in political discourse, as Turner shows (idem. 71-72) when the presidencies of Bill Clinton and F.D.Roosevelt are set against each other as in a race (the emerging concept) and we are told; *So far, Clinton has failed completely to keep pace with FDR.*

In the February 2002 edition of *Metaphorik*, Nerlich, Hamilton and Rowe went on to demonstrate the way in which policy-forming was inextricable from the metaphors embedded in set scenarios or traditional political narratives when they showed how biblical imagery of plagues and pestilence were introduced to present the British foot and mouth epidemic as a curse that could only be dealt with by a government that took up weapons to wage war against it. As the authors showed, the government established a complex narrative that it “lived through” and which it invited the British public to “live through.” This narrative entailed a series of extended metaphors which represented the government’s handling of the issue as valiant and heroic. The government portrayed its attempt to stamp out the demon disease as a deliverance from evil. White-coated health inspectors became angels of mercy whose job was to destroy evil.

1.2. The Second War in Iraq

For the vast majority of us, it seems unlikely that the metaphor TRYING TO STAMP OUT FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IS WAR did anything to pervert our idea about what war is.

However, during the build up to the second war in Iraq, I was continually confronted with representations of war which appeared to me problematic. Given that I was teaching classes on translation and cultural studies in English to French students and students of other European, North African and Asian countries, I was inevitably faced with the task of explaining (or trying to explain) the different metaphoric frameworks and narratives that both Britain and the USA appeared to be living through. That these frameworks and narratives were culturally specific and subject to the influence of contemporary politics in these countries became increasingly obvious as students asked questions about the meanings of words and expressions. Many students found the “stories” in the British and US press and TV difficult to follow. Several spoke of a growing cultural divide between Europe and the US and voiced the opinion that they were no longer on the same wavelength as the Americans after the September 11th attack. Protest movements in France (many of which were organised by American students, as in Grenoble) denounced the representation of the prospective war in Iraq.

Lakoff’s now famous article on the first war in Iraq did much to explain to inhabitants of other countries (especially non-English speaking countries) the conceptual framework that shapes the USA’s foreign politics and the terms with which it justifies war by a curious merging of the Clausewitzian model of *War as Politics Pursued by Other Means* with the fairy tale narrative of rushing to the defence of a victim to vanquish evil. As Lakoff argued (1991/2003), when a cost-effective venture into another country could be superimposed upon the fairy tale structure of the damsel in distress (as the “raping of Kuwait” was portrayed), the US was only too inclined to reach for the trigger of war.

1.3. The Switch

My intention, in this article, is not to attack the Blair government and the Bush administration or to defend Iraq. I shall simply try to examine the arguments that Bush and Blair put forward for war and the analysis and representation of those discourses by one of Britain’s most respected quality magazines.

Being neither an activist nor a political analyst, I must stress the limited interest of what follows. Political specialists of the war in Iraq exist and I am not one of them. This article will offer no specialist knowledge of the history of Iraq or US international relations with this country and its diverse peoples. It might be argued that the interpretation I offer holds no political interest, strictly speaking. The analysis which follows is an exercise in rhetoric and

discourse analysis. The aim is to establish whether a curious semantic transfer was taking place in the representation of war.

This, at least, was the impression that I formed of during the build up to the war in the autumn of 2002 and winter of 2002/2003. I increasingly had the impression that *The Economist* was presenting war as something else; problem-solving, accepting a challenge, execution, a game and even a commodity that could be bought off the shelf. Meanwhile, the hype for the war seemed to have spilled over into the other articles of the weekly magazine. While war wasn't war, trying to eradicate the SARS disease was. So was business, politics, international relations and even further consolidation of the EU among a whole host of other issues. I spoke of my impression to Scottish, English, American, French and German colleagues, most of whom, once they had heard me out, agreed that my impression that some form of two-way semantic transfer appeared to be taking place, seemed to them to have some basis. I have decided to call this two-way semantic transfer *the switch* and will define it as *the transformation of one term into others, while simultaneously transforming these latter terms into the initial term*. In the case in hand, war was being presented as cleaning up, surgery or crime fighting among other forms of representation. Meanwhile, business, eradicating terrorism, and even pacifism were all conceived in terms of warfare.

Having defined the switch, it remains to be seen whether my impression will be borne out by a rigorous linguistic analysis of a defined corpus. I selected a total of one hundred and fifty *Economist* articles varying in length from approximately 3000 to 9000 words. One hundred of these texts were specifically concerned with the war in Iraq. The remaining fifty texts bore no relation to the war, though the word “war” and the logic of warfare appeared in them. My idea, (or ideal) was to avoid arguing from any political stance, and simply to allow the data studied to condition the conclusions that could be drawn. Despite my admiration for Lakoff and his article on the metaphoric representation of the first war in Iraq, I did not intend to adopt his anti-war stance, but rather to discuss the conceptual coherence of the way the war was represented during the period of its promotion and during the actual waging of it.

1.4. Why *The Economist*?

The Economist was an obvious choice for my corpus. Not only because it had been while reading its articles that I had first formed the impression that a *switch* was taking place, but also for three further reasons.

- (1.) *The Economist* offers intelligent and high-quality analysis of international politics.

(2.) Though situated towards the centre-right, it is always eager to show the limits of liberalist policies and though it argued in favour of the war, its journalists were often critical of Bush, his neo-conservative advisors and his government's relationship with Britain. Despite the sympathetic press it gave to Blair, it continually pointed out what it felt to be incoherencies, blunders and bad reasoning in his attempt to win support for the war.

(3.) Most importantly, for this study, *The Economist* is well-written.

I do not mean by that, that I consider most of the British press to be badly-written. On the contrary, I find most of it is expertly tailored for the public which it addresses. What is usually called "the gutter press" shows a machiavelian sophistry in the strategies by which educated and astute individuals pull off a mimicry of the trenchant and simplistic political opinions of the British masses that read such newspapers and assimilate their opinions.

If I contend that *The Economist* is well-written, it is because it introduces multiple points of views, weighs up the arguments of alternative stances, takes into consideration the arguments of politicians from other countries and develops its own arguments using reason and logic rather than image and opinion. When it does use metaphors, it often refuses to be seduced by them unthinkingly, but, on the contrary, questions the validity of metaphors in fashion, plays with them and frequently offers counter-metaphors. This innovation in their use of metaphor is inseparable from their refusal of a certain intellectual laxity in political analysis. Impatient politicians and journalists are content to simply repeat the phrases and buzz words that are in the air. The journalists of *The Economist*, in contrast, exercise a form of linguistic vigilance which, while it may not allow the reader to "see what's behind the words", does alert him to the fact that all language used by politicians reflects a political stance, a way of seeing things, and that other stances are always conceivable. This does not mean to say that *The Economist* had no political agenda during the build-up to the second war in Iraq; quite the opposite was true. But if it was involved in a certain form of metaphorical manipulation, it seems reasonable to assume that other more obviously manipulative media were probably far more heavy-handed in their treatment of the build up to war.

2. War is...

2.1. Protometaphors in the Representation of War

If we seek to establish whether our perception of what is meant by war is being perverted, we must first establish whether we know what we mean by "war". This is far from certain. How many forms of war are there? Do they all form part of one umbrella term? At what moment

does a revolt become a civil war? Obviously, the answer depends on whether you are a revolutionary. If that is the case, you will be inclined to speak of it from the outset as war and may be tempted by such metaphors as “class warfare” to link up cause (the intolerably corrupt nature of l’ancien régime) and effect (the war). On the other hand, if you are the king or the president, you will be far more inclined to refuse to acknowledge that a bid for power has transformed itself into a civil war. You will deny the legitimacy of the struggle and will appeal to other countries for support in your attempt to crush this “revolt”. History offers a great diversity of conflicts which have all been ascribed the name of “war”. Is it legitimate to put the feuding clan wars of medieval Scotland on the same level with Alexander’s invasion of the Indus valley? Can the French revolution be compared to the complex wars between (at least) eight tribes that are going on in the Congo at this very moment? In what way was the “cold war” a war? Did the term not rather grow out of a metaphor? It seems reasonable to assume that the “cold war” was initially understood to be a form of peace which involved certain characteristics of war (political struggle, alignment of allies, mini-wars as forms of ambush and frontier redefinition). In time, however, this metaphoric concept seems to have become almost literal, and in doing so, seems to have altered our very definition of war.

It is not my intention to offer a taxonomy of war throughout the world and throughout history (a daunting task). But it is important to stress that the term “war” itself is a concept and, like many concepts, far from having a precise, constant and unproblematic denotation (as most terms are usually thought to have), “war” is variable, unstable and subject to discussion and debate as is the case with most concepts. Moreover, the term “war” appears to be undergoing a certain mutation since the end of the cold war. The most basic definition I propose, to allow us to proceed in our discussion, is the following:

War is a violent struggle between two or more nations, peoples or large groups of men or women over a sustained period of time, in which the aim of the parties involved is the subjugation or annihilation of the other party or parties or their expulsion from a given territory.

This is, of course, a reductive definition, but it should serve our purposes to allow us to show when some non-violent activity is being metaphorically conceived in terms of “warfare”.

From the early autumn of 2002 the possibility of US intervention in Iraq was called “war”. Thus far it seems that a spade was being called a spade. How was this war represented though? In terms of trenches and bombing raids? The following protometaphors were found in the editions of *The Economist* that came out between September 2002 and May 2003.

War is

1. Defence
2. Accepting a challenge
3. Lighting a fire
4. Unleashing a wild beast
5. A film
6. Surgery
7. Execution
8. A game
9. Problem solving
10. A vehicle
11. Reaching a destination
12. A commodity
13. Crime fighting

These 13 protometaphors can be divided into 10 fairly common or “traditional” ones, that is to say metaphorical equations which are found in common usage and three “novel” ones, by which I mean metaphorical equations which have been newly coined either by *The Economist* or other media in the period directly preceding the build up to the second war with Iraq.

Traditional Protometaphors for War	
1. Defence	
2. Accepting a challenge	
3. Lighting a fire	
4. A vehicle	
5. Unleashing a wild beast	
6. A film	
7. Surgery	
8. Execution	
9. A game	
10. Problem solving	

Novel Protometaphors for War	
1. Reaching a destination	
2. A commodity	
3. Crime fighting	

2.2. Ten Traditional Protometaphors for War

1. War is Defence	
30/11/02 p.11	(George Bush) ‘has rewritten America’s security doctrine around the notion of pre-emption , so that he can “ confront the worst threats before they emerge ”.’
30/11/02, p.11	‘But “ forward defence ” – striking al-Qaeda and its offshoots in distant lands, closing down its foreign sanctuaries, intimidating its sponsors and

	lopping off its paymasters – can only be part of this prolonged war. '
15/11/03 p.26	'France and Germany both worry about America's claim to a right to pre-emptive action to deal with new threats from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. '

2. War is Accepting a Challenge

08/02/02 p.8	'Mr Powell told the council that "We must not shrink from whatever is ahead of us. "'
08/03/03 p.13	'On most of these issues (Afganistan, North Korea and Iraq) America now has little choice but to take up the fight. '

3. War is Lighting a Fire

30/11/02 p.39	'But the full account of its weapons programmes, which Iraq is obliged to give to the weapons instructors and the Security Council on or before December 8 th , is likely to be Mr. Hussein's first big chance to ignite a war.
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4. War is a vehicle

08/13/03 p.13	'before George Bush begins the countdown to war. '
05/04/03 p.47	(Bush) 'personally took the decision to kick-start the war with a missile attack on Saddam's headquarters.

5. War is Unleashing a Wild Animal

30/11/03 p.39	(The advance party of 17 inspectors from Unmovic and IAEA, the two United Nations agencies charged with finding and destroying weapons in Iraq) 'will also be burdened by the knowledge that their findings could unleash a war. '
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6. War is a Film

30/11/03 p.67	'the no-war scenario is not necessarily the best for the economy.'
29/03/03 p.47	(Donald Rumsfeld) 'A man who has seen only two films in years "Saving Private Ryan and "Black Hawk Down" – found himself treated as a matinee idol. '

7. War is Surgery

29/03/03 p.43	'The current combat has limited aims. It seeks to remove Saddam Hussein and his regime without massive damage to Iraq's civilian population and infrastructure. Hence the surgical strikes against the leadership and rules of engagement that seek to limit Iraqi civilian casualties, even at the risk of increasing American ones.'
29/03/03 p.47	'From the first he (Rumsfeld) pushed for an all-out-war on terrorism rather than just a surgical strike on Al Qaeda. '

8. War is Execution

29/03/03 p.11	'The " decapitation " strike with which the war opened failed to kill Saddam Hussein or his lieutenants.'
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9. War is a Game	
21/09/03 p.39	‘Given that few expect Iraq’s reprieve to last very long, this allows America’s strained allies time to prepare for a less abrupt endgame than seemed on the cards a week ago.’
21/09/03 p.39	(in relation to Iraq’s decision to welcome back United Nations weapons inspectors) ‘the feeling across much of the Arab world is that this was Iraq’s last ace. ’
05/03/03 p.25	‘Still, if the Iraqi battlefield looks nothing like the catastrophe implied by some of Mr Rumsfeld’s critics, neither is it quite the “catastrophic success” predicted by his cheerleaders. ”

10. War is Problem-Solving	
07/09/02 p.39	‘...leading officials in Europe worry more about how the US might mishandle the problem of Iraq – by undertaking unilateral or extra-legal military action – than worrying about Iraq itself.’
05/10/02 p.49	‘ Dealing with Iraq ’
08/03/03 p.13	‘...peace did not break out with the end of the cold war. Even in Europe, there was bloody tidying up to do (with American help) in the Balkans throughout the 1990s. And while Europe during the 1990s was finishing the job of making itself whole and free , other parts of the world were not so lucky. This was not a decade that established universal peace, which the Bush administration is now needlessly disturbing. It was a decade during which the Clinton administration neglected too many unresolved problems. ’

2.3. Commentary

The Fairy Tale narrative Lakoff speaks of (1991) did seem to emerge in the way in which Bush and Blair expressed concern for the well-being of the average Iraqi and the need to liberate him from the evil regime of Saddam Hussein (who was increasingly called “The tyrant of Bagdad”). However, the main reason given for military intervention was danger to the world. Saddam was a menace to world peace, and the Republican administration set itself up as a defender of that peace and of its own citizens. It would be fearless in accepting the challenge. This set Saddam up as a spoiler for a fight, a role that he didn’t seem very well cut out for given that his government accepted the return of weapons inspectors in a bid to avert war and generally condemned US intervention as the ‘invasion of the infidels”.

Similarly, when the protometaphor WAR IS THE IGNITING OF A FIRE was used, it was neither Bush nor Blair but Saddam who was conceived of as lighting the fire. Declaring war was conceived in terms of unleashing a wild beast (a not uncommon expression which comes from Mark Anthony’s words in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, *let loose the dogs of war*, Act 3, sc.1, l.273). Such a metaphor tends to invoke the sublime fury of war rather than highlighting its horror. But in any event, it was neither the British nor the American government which

were conceived as letting loose the dogs of war; circumstances did it. It was the findings of the weapons researchers in Umovic and IAEA which were conceived as bearing the heavy responsibility.

When war was conceived as a vehicle, it was not any ordinary machine. Bush would kick-start a motorbike war, an image tailored to cut a dashing and resolute figure, both young and dynamic. He would start the countdown to a space rocket war. War would be modern and technological with the attendant associations of adventure and discovery. Bush was, like Captain Kirk, set to *boldly go where no man has gone before*.

When war was framed in terms of surgery, it became a necessary operation, the cutting away of a cancer, the extraction of a contaminated body part. Saddam's regime was corrupting the body of his country. When *The Economist* spoke of WAR AS EXECUTION, Saddam was conceived as a criminal to be dealt the death penalty, a protometaphor which was consolidated by WAR IS CRIME-FIGHTING, a novel but increasingly wide-spread protometaphor.

Real war was often conceived in unreal terms. The war wasn't really war with blood and burning babies, it was a film. Rumsfeld was a star; one you could love or loathe but somewhat aloof from the reality of conflict in any case. When the war wasn't a film, it was often a game. Iraq had *played its last ace* and now war was definitely *on the cards*. Iraq was a loser, but winning and losing were all part of the game. This was the logic of the conceptual framework we were invited to think within. Admittedly, *The Economist* did at times use the protometaphor WAR IS A GAME in an ironic way and turn it against the Bush administration, as when it conceived of the advocates of war as *cheerleaders* who didn't have so as much to be *cheery* about. But irony does not actually contradict metaphoric frameworks. Often, on the contrary, it loosens them up to make a more comfortable space to live in. Irony, *ironically*, often consolidates protometaphoric frameworks.

All of these metaphoric frameworks had the effect of representing war in a positive light. But perhaps the most fundamental framework found in *The Economist* in the period studied – and the one that was used least lucidly - was, WAR IS PROBLEM-SOLVING. Both the British and the Americans pride themselves on a hands-on utilitarianism, a pragmatic down-to-earth presence of mind and a resolute willingness to handle and resolve problems. Utilitarianism was a quality which was expounded and promulgated by Jeremy Bentham in England in the first years of the nineteenth century and adopted and elaborated by John Stuart Mill in the 1860s. Both these thinkers saw utilitarianism as a philosophy which extolled action which

conformed to the principle of utility where it tended to augment the happiness of the community as a whole. Utilitarianism was a term that was soon to be adopted in politics and in industry during the industrial revolution. Its meaning was, however, severely limited as the term came to denote all that was pragmatic and ultimately profitable. And it was this reductive meaning of “utilitarianism” was something that gave Mathew Arnold great concern. While lauding the manifest advances of the British during the reign of Victoria, Arnold worried that British pragmatism showed an aggressive impatience with reflection, contemplation and critique (qualities he, rightly or wrongly, attributed to the French). Arnold portrayed the English, in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9), as ardent problem-solvers but also resolute philistines. They were, he felt, becoming a people too concerned with the immediate solution of immediate problems to see the wider picture or the implications of their all-too-activeness.

Was this characteristic to be found during the build up to war? America and Britain both saw Iraq as a problem *to be dealt with*. Problems caused by the “solution”, war, would have to be “dealt with” later. The task in hand was solving the Iraq question. How that “task” was to be handled, didn’t allow space for the question of whether either Britain or America were qualified to, or capable of, “solving the problem”. Neither did it allow for any alternative way of conceiving the approaching war. And war was approaching. It was inevitable, because war, as a problem, could not be left unresolved. The moral obligation implicit in pragmatism, - the busyness that Max Weber attributed to cultures animated by a protestant work ethic – is all too evident here. Not going to war became as irresponsible as not turning up to work on Monday morning. Unfortunately a workaday diligence is in no way antithetic to a moral absence of spirit that comes with a blinkered vision of the world and a lack of awareness concerning what we do in it. Constructive men build bombs. “Responsible” men are sent to organise the digging mass graves after ethnic cleansing. What is at stake here is a conflict of moral-obligations. Just as some people can’t see the forest for the trees, others conscientiously tend the fire while the forest burns.

Certainly, international relations suffered greatly from the protometaphor WAR IS PROBLEM-SOLVING. To the problem-solvers, alternatives became objections. Doubts became mistrust. Hesitation was seen as betrayal. All of them were hindering the problem-solving process, a process which, once set in motion, should work as smoothly as possible. (Because the problem-solving process is conceived as a machine). Opposition was as intolerable as it was inconceivable. This was the stance espoused by both Bush and Blair. *The*

Economist with great justification underlined the fact that France’s position in relation to the war was not as disinterested as Chirac’s discourse on the “droits de l’homme” implied, given France’s existing oil contracts with Iraq. The magazine’s main objection to Chirac was, however, that he was “awkward” and “meddling”, i.e. he was “getting in the way” of the problem-solving process. On February 8th (p.13) it argued:

He gives the impression of being more interested in clipping the wings of the superpower than in **tackling the problem of Saddam**...If France cannot in conscience support this war, **better to stand aside than to stand in the way**.

The moral content of such pragmatism is not easy for the German Geist or the French esprit to fathom. It seems only too much like bad faith. But such a simplification fails to understand the frustration and even the sense of outrage felt by English and American politicians who not only wanted - but also felt morally compelled – “to just get on with it.” It would be ridiculous to suggest that the French and the Germans are not pragmatic nations. Stereotypes derived from seeing the Germans through German idealist philosophy and German Romanticism, just like stereotypes derived from seeing the French through images of foppery, the French lover and moral laxity, would tend to fuel the idea that neither nation produces the down-to-earth pragmatic utilitarian man that America and Britain do. But such silly ideas do little to explain the success of the French arms industry or the universally admired precision of Germany’s BMW. However unfounded such stereotypes are, though, it is perhaps true that only the Americans and the British show such great esteem for utilitarianism and venerate problem-solving as though it was of a sacrosanct nature. This is a fact that bodes ill for future diplomatic relations between France and Germany and Britain and the US. Rumsfeld was already stressing in February 2003 that: *France has been a problem* and that *Germany has been a problem* (15/02/03, p.25). The question immediately became; how to **deal with them**.

2.4. Novel Protometaphors for War

1. War is reaching a destination	
30/11/02/ p.39	‘The paths to war .’
2. War is a Commodity	
30/11/02 p.67	‘Recent studies suggest that even a successful military campaign in Iraq could carry a hefty price tag .’
29/03/03 p.36	‘An affordable war .’
3. War is Crime-fighting	
30/12/02 p.21	‘A few rogue regimes are thought by the CIA to have kept them’ (chemical weapons)

15/03/03 p.26	‘But whereas France, by threatening its veto in the broad way it has, seems to be making the Iraq row a test of wills with America, both America and Britain see it as a test of the Security Council’s resolve to enforce its own repeated resolutions against a serial offender who has shown every determination to resist. ’
19/04/03 p.20	‘Some of the coalitions other most wanted may have fled the country (...) a small number have indeed been captured (...) But these scalps have not yet led the coalition to Mr Hussein’s alleged weapons of mass destruction.’

2.5. Commentary

WAR IS A DESTINATION is a curious adaptation of victory as destination. It would be common-place and conventional to say “the troupes finally attained their victory”. In such an expression, the victory is a goal the soldiers strive towards (often symbolised by the taking of the capital, as in the case of Berlin in 1945). In the novel adaptation above, the war itself – its outbreak - is considered as a destination. This metaphor links up to the idea of war as a solution. Bush and Blair saw themselves as reasonably trying to build - or work towards - a consensus for war. Far-from seeing themselves as “warmongers”, they considered their task to be a constructive one, a fact that became increasingly clear as “invasion” gave way to “regime change” which in turn was transformed into “reconstructing Iraq”. Their reaching this consensus-approved war was the goal, the destination. Hindering that trajectory, preventing them from reaching that goal, as we have seen, became obstruction, and obstruction was increasingly seen in terms of destructive attempts to upset the consolidation of an alliance for the war.

Evidence of a Clausewitzian approach to war was found in *The Economist* which conceived the war (somewhat grotesquely) as a commodity to be picked up at the shops. The war carried an expensive price tag. Who was going to pick up the bill? Was it affordable? Of course, no government can afford to ignore such questions before launching into war and *The Economist*, as a part of the specialized press concerned with finance, could hardly be expected to forget to address the question, but the flippant manner it used to broach the economic angle did clash with the humanitarian interest it expressed in minimising harm to civilians and the in reconstructing the country.

The most radically new protometaphor used by *The Economist* was one it inherited from other western press; WAR IS CRIME FIGHTING. What is radically new about such rhetoric is that it assumes that one country has a claim to sovereign laws which can be applied to other nations. The politicians of those nations and the regimes themselves can thereafter be

conceived in terms of criminals. The invading country thereby attributes to itself the right – and indeed the obligation - to distribute justice.

Crime-fighting was reformulated within the American imagination as the Loan Ranger sorting out the problems of the wild west. Hussein's ministers remained *at large* (The Economist, 03/05/02 p.39). They had to be *hunted down*. Their *scalps* were required. In the same way, Bush had announced he wanted bin Laden *dead or alive*. Metaphors involving Indians, discredited since the 1960s in the concern for a politically correct language to speak about ethnic diversity, were dragged out of the closet and revamped. In what seemed to many Europeans, a burlesque cowboy carnival, Bush and his colleagues were presented as a posse that was going to rid the world of evil and evil doers and clean up the world as their forefathers had cleaned up the wild west. The jingoistic Hollywood cowboy rhetoric with its simple black and white caricatures of good and evil may be one of the factors that helps explain a certain reigning optimism among certain parts of American society, since such rhetoric seems to have drugged people into the reassuring misconception that world politics is (despite all evidence to the contrary) really a rather simple affair after all.

3. ...is War

3.1. Warfare Protometaphors

As we have seen, in the discussion of the Iraq question in *The Economist* from September 2002 to May 2003, war was often not war. This did not mean that war was absent from the magazine though. Conversely, a great many other news items were considered in terms of warfare. In the corpus defined, 17 protometaphors were found.

1.Propaganda
2.Trying to alleviate poverty
3.Trying to eradicate terrorism
4.Trying to cure disease
5.Business
6.Party politics
7.International politics
8.Student protest
9.Cultural competition
10.Pacifism
11.Economic planning
12.Trying to prevent drug traffic
13.the consolidation of the EU
14.Making peace
15.Trying to eradicate tax evasion
16.Harming the environment
17.Social unrest

Is War

These seventeen protometaphors can be divided into ten fairly common or traditional ones and seven novel ones.

Traditional Warfare Protometaphors
1.Propaganda
2.Trying to alleviate poverty
3.Trying to cure disease
4.Business
5.Party politics
6.International politics
7.Student protest
8.Trying to prevent drug traffic
9.Trying to eradicate tax evasion
10.Social unrest

Novel Warfare Protometaphors
1.Trying to eradicate terrorism
2.Cultural competition
3.Pacifism
4.Economic planning
5.The Consolidation of the EU
6.Making Peace
7.Harming the environment

3.2. Traditional Warfare Protometaphors

1.Propaganda is War	
29/03/03 p.28	‘Two factors have emboldened Arab protesters. The first is that Iraq, battered and despised as its regime is, appears to be winning the propaganda war. ’
2.Trying to Alleviate Poverty is War	
26/10/02 p.81	‘ WEAPONS OF MASS SALVATION In this article, Jeffrey Sachs argues that, in the war against want , no less than in the war against terror, actions speak louder than words.’
26/10/02 p.81	‘...emergency food aid and farming technologies that could avert literally millions of deaths each year in the wars against epidemic disease, drought and famine. ’
26/10/02 p.81	‘The great leaders of the second world war alliance , Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, understood the twin sides of destruction and salvation . Their war aims were not only to defeat fascism, but to create a world of shared prosperity . Roosevelt talked not only about Freedom from fear but also Freedom from Want.’
3.Trying to Cure Disease is War	
05/04/03 p.13	‘ Epidemics, like wars, bring out strong emotions. Fear and anger are chief among them... Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome is raging. The viruses that cause SARS are formidable foes . They are invisible attackers , spreading with alarming ease across continents and of unknown strength.’
4.Business is War	
08/02/03 p.9	‘BNP also appears to have lost out to Cr�dit Agricole in the battle for Cr�dit Lyonnais though it is still considering whether to raise its bid.’
29/03/03 p.66	‘ FORMERLY HAWKISH TRADERS TAKE COVER AS WAR’S REALITY SINKS IN ...Stock markets responded by beating a hasty retreat from their exuberance in the week before the war began...the quick about turn may have caught them (some hedge funds) for a second time...Recent weeks have provided fine evidence of such violent under- and over-shooting ...Shares will not find it easy coming home from this war. ’
12/04/03 p.66	(Larry Ellison, the Boss of Oracle, claimed) ‘Microsoft, the world’s biggest software company risked being “ wiped off the face of the earth ” by Linux...’
5.Politics is War	
21/09/02 p.31	(Austria’s J�rg Haider) ‘Is his Kampf really over?’
26/10/02 p.75	‘ TAKENAKA ATTACKED ...The prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, rushed to his minister’s defence the following day, demanding – and getting – his cabinet’s full support for Mr Takenaka. Mr Koizumi nonetheless faces battles with his party and his coalition partners. ’

15/02/03 p.49	<p>‘THE CHARGE OF THE THINK TANKS The unusual body of people behind many of George Bush’s ideas ... Many foreigners wish America would calm down a little. Why doesn’t it reign in its dogs of war? Why doesn’t it put a break on turbo-capitalism instead of revving it up? Why can’t it behave more like Jimmy Carter and less like John Wayne?’</p>
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6.International Politics is War	
15/02/03 p.26	(Chirac) ‘seems determined to press his argument with America to the hilt. ’
15/03/03 p.39	‘More and more, Mr Blair looked like a man caught between growing American impatience with its ally’s frenzied but fruitless diplomacy, and the determination of the French and Russians to shoot down any compromise proposed by the British. ’
05/04/03 p.43	<p>‘AMERICAN DIPLOMACY COLLATERAL DAMAGE Gloom is settling on those who want to look beyond Iraq to repair America’s relations with the rest of the world.’</p>

7.Student Protest is War	
08/03/03 p.41	‘Students used to see themselves as intellectual warriors fighting on behalf of oppressed people everywhere.’

8.Trying to Prevent Drug Traffic is War	
05/04/03 p.14	‘Time to think again about the rules of engagement in the war on drugs. ’
05/04/03 p.14	‘But the most sensible policy – a review of the three UN conventions that set the ground rules for fighting the war on drugs – will be ignored.’
05/04/03 p.14	‘Perhaps a proposal to add tobacco to the UN drugs conventions would help bring common sense to the war on drugs. ’

9.Trying to Eradicate Tax-Evasion is War	
05/10/02 p.64	<p>‘IT’S WAR Getting people to pay their taxes (in the Philippines) is the government’s biggest challenge...(Gloria Macapegal Arroyo, the president) ordered all her forces into battle against the Philippines’ pervasive tax evasion. To show how serious she is, she even hauled a manacled prisoner of the war against tax cheats in front of the cameras, for a personal dressing-down on television. The president’s belligerence is understandable.</p>

10.Social Unrest is War	
19/10/02 p.43	‘Cruelly oppressive though it may be, the (Iraqi) state does provide security. “The whole society is a minefield. ” said an aid worker who has widely travelled across the country. “Lift the pressure and it could really explode.”’

3.3. Commentary

Warfare metaphors are common-place. In the 1990s, the frenzied mergers and buy-outs of national and international giant corporations were invariably conceived in terms of warfare and combat. *Aggressive take-overs* threatened to devour their victims. Business strategy became how to *out-manoeuvre the opposition: To kill or be killed*. Companies initiated market surveys to *size up the target, take aim and launch an offensive*. Market share was conceived in terms of *terrain conquered*. Companies *gained and lost ground*. This language was to be found just as much in French as in English (Underhill, 2004).

However, on the whole, BUSINESS IS WAR was, curiously, not one of the most common protometaphors to be found in *The Economist* corpus. Why should this be? Is it because business is down in the dumps after the mini-crashes of the world-stock markets in January and March 2001, followed by the terrorist attack on the World Trade September, did little to assure that the economy would get the “soft-landing” Allan Greenspan hoped for? This may go some way to explaining the relative rarity of warfare metaphors in discussion of business, though, as with most linguistic fashions, no doubt the reasons are diverse and complex.

Other articles were, however, rife with warfare metaphors. The above ten are of a conventional nature. But two points should be stressed: (1.) They did not, on the whole, represent these metaphoric conflicts in a negative light. Consequently, they contributed indirectly to *The Economist's* attempt to portray war in a positive light, to rehabilitate it, after the peace movement and pop songs of the 1960s had done a great deal to discredit war outright in the popular imagination of citizens of western democracies. *The Economist's* journalists tended to portray the metaphoric wars as good, justified and necessary. Attacks became moral crusades. Destruction became the purifying fire, the prerequisite of rebirth. War was being, at a subconscious level, reintroduced into the natural order of things. (2.) Stories involving these allegoric wars were often intertwined with reports on the actual war in Iraq, though ironically the allegoric wars, such as POLITICS IS WAR, often served to represent war advocates as victims, while those who opposed war were portrayed as being aggressive.

War, as a violent struggle against evil, became the back drop to the war in Iraq, something that went some way to actually normalising the war itself when it came along. Many people, brought up on a staple diet of *Give Peace a Chance* and books like *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Wilfred Owen's First World War poems have a gut reaction against any form of armed combat. But wars against want and against disease would hardly be likely to find detractors. Who would sympathise with the sufferings of a gangland drugs lord? Tax evasion

might be widely practiced in many countries, but nobody would think of considering tax evaders as the “the good guys” and of openly condemning a government who declares war against tax evasion.

The persistent use of such metaphors was probably not intentional on the part of the journalists of *The Economist*. Indeed, we might be tempted to consider it simply as a kind of “rhetorical overspill”. But war rhetoric – as a Freudian slip – tends to tell us something about the people who use it. We tend to choose images that please us or excite us. Sensualists will caress the curves of erotic metaphors. Pragmatists will prefer mechanical metaphors. Economists will balance books, ask for accounts, and wonder whether pay backs pay off sufficiently. Fukuyama and Becker for example consider *fewer children* constitute a reduction in a couples’ *joint capital in the marriage* (Fukuyama, 103). Dreamers will always crave for the vague and blurry world of beyond, before or up above. A recurrent insistence on warfare metaphors does, therefore, tend to imply a fundamental (though perhaps largely unconscious) sympathy with, and desire for, the conflict and power struggle that warfare allows.

It would be “unscientific” to claim that *The Economist*, during the period studied, used warfare protometaphors more frequently than before. Such a claim would have to be established by a comparative study of warfare metaphors during another period. Nevertheless; this was, at least, my impression. POLITICS IS WAR seemed an ever-present protometaphor, and the actors in the scenarios were often the politicians involved in the conflict. Blair was considered (again and again) to be the first casualty of war. The frequency of the expression “the first casualty” was so great, the *Private Eye* (21/03/03, p.5) amused its readers by listing 11 “first” casualties including Blair, his *Lib-Dem love-in* alliance with the centre party and other *casualties* such as television ratings and hours prices. *The Economist* of the 8th of March spoke of *brave Mr Blair* in an article entitled *Bloody, but not bowed*. Throughout these metaphors, either Blair was an innocent victim of an aggressive attack, or was boldly standing up to opposition; he was not an aggressor.

Away from the war, warfare metaphors blazed in *The Economist*. Blair’s relationship with Gordon Brown was described in terms of *open factional warfare* (24/05/03, p.38). In Germany, the Christian Democrat’s leader was *coming under fire* (05/04/03, p.33). Dissension became a *Rumble in the ranks*. Blair was assailed by dissenters from within, such as his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who resigned after voicing an eloquent critique of the war-hype. Blair was assailed from without by the *peaceniks* or the *refusniks* as they came to be known in Economist-terminology. This curious neologism was coined to evoke “beatniks”

and, by association, hippies. It painted the three powers which detracted from the war (Russia, France and Germany) as hippy idealists who were just not “with it” or aware of what was going on. That Putin, an ex-KGB agent in Germany and leader of a world power engaged in crushing the Chechen rebellion, could be imagined with flowers in his hair, smoking shit and humming along to Bob Dylan and Joan Baez stretches the imagination. Chirac’s full support of the Afghanistan war was also downplayed by this metaphor. Only Germany had any real claim to being a pacifist nation. And it would be hard to imagine Britain or the US relishing the image of a war-hungry Germany after the systematic production of “heroic war films” from the 1940s till the 1970s in which “our lads” were heroically displayed slitting the throats of the “nasty Nazis” and gunning down the “barbarian invaders”. Putin escaped a great deal of satire that was heaped on both Schröder and Chirac. Both these were portrayed as incompetents who were not only hindering the problem-solving process, but were incapable of sorting out their own internal problems. Articles on German economic problems and tax-cut controversies were juxtaposed with articles on Schröder’s anti-war stance. France was found to be meddling in Europe and elsewhere and was generally considered by Economist journalists to have meddled too much behind the scenes doing deals with Saddam during the 1990s when it should have been imposing sanctions.

Clearly, France and Germany had become the enemies of Britain and the US in the protometaphor INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IS WAR. In one article (05/04/03, p.43), entitled *Dealing with the foot-draggers: Blame, aim, fire*, the countries of the anti-war alliance seemed to be conceived as deserters to be duly punished. We were told: *Germany and Russia, which supported France, seem to have dropped out of the administration’s line of fire*. Chirac tried to avoid confrontational rhetoric, a fact which the Economist faithfully represented: *Even Jacques Chirac, the French president, has been downplaying his differences with Mr Bush...Now the French leader says that he, too, wants to avoid an adversarial relationship with the world’s only superpower*. But he seemed to many of the Britons and Americans, nevertheless, to have been too *aggressive* in his negotiations. Just as his argument had been, like the traitorous dagger, *pushed to the hilt*, so France’s refusal to support her brothers-in-arms in their time of need was seen as *firing a bullet in the back* of the superpower (as journalists claimed one of Villepin’s colleagues had overheard him calling their intention to use their veto at the Security Council).

If politics is politics, solutions have to be found and compromises have to be reached by mutual cooperation, however much power-play structures the relations. If POLITICS IS

WAR, on the other hand, the traitors deserve to be strung up or put against a wall and shot. The emotional content of such rhetoric is precisely what Aristotle and Hobbes had in mind when they disapproved of metaphorical sophistry. Because of this metaphor, we saw the break down of the “Jaw Jaw” that Churchill, a reluctant but great leader in war, favored over “War War”. The US was offended, and began looking for jaw-breaking arguments to knock-out the opposition. Inevitably, such a strategy in international politics was not likely to generate sympathy for the cause or inspire trust. It did not coax, flatter and seduce the lesser allies (as lesser allies usually demand to be coaxed, flattered and seduced). Churchill was careful to avoid the abrasive rhetoric of betrayal in his appeal to the conquered people of France after the *Wehrmacht* had set itself up in Paris. And he was certainly too astute to chastise Roosevelt for “dragging his feet” during the USA’s three-year abstention from the Second World War (1939-1942).

3.4. Novel Warfare Protometaphors

The above conventional warfare protometaphors were frequently aired in the articles of *The Economist* and were intermingled with novel ones, some adopted from elsewhere, others no doubt invented by the creative muse that stimulates the magazine’s journalists. In the given corpus, the following protometaphors were found:

1.Trying to eradicate Terrorism is War	
07/09/02 p.54	‘...the questions all come from people who think that Mr Bush is biting off more than he can chew: that he is wrong to link the war on terrorism to the problem of rogue states...’
07/09/02 p.84	‘Rohan Gunaratna’s “Inside al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror”, embraces the notion of Mr bin Laden as the godfather of an army of terror with foot soldiers in every region of the world. ’
19/10/02 p.13	‘ A WORLD OF TERROR BALI, IRAQ AND NOW A NUCLEAR KOREA ...How is the world to cope with these multiplying dangers? The first grim truth to accept is that the war on terrorism did not begin with last year’s felling of New York’s twin towers, and is not going to end in Bali... a long and many fronted war without clear victories. ’

2.Cultural Competition is War	
07/12/02 p.72	‘ THE MISS WORLD WAR ...Given all of the talk of a clash of civilisations , might Miss Morely (Miss World’s chief executive) deserve praise for fearlessly promoting western “culture”?’
03/05/02 p.46	‘Mr Ashcroft represents a minority in his own party, let alone in the country. He has no chance of winning the culture wars : the forces arrayed against him , from the media to the universities, are too vast.’

3.Pacifism is War	
15/02/02 p.40	‘ BOMBS AWAY Britain’s anti-war movement is booming but divided’
15/02/02 p.40	‘It (the anti-war movement) adds up to a large but not yet lethal problem for Mr Blair’
15/02/02 p.27	(American officials) “...are also genuinely put out and frustrated that, having listened to their European allies, including the French, and tried to deal with the Iraq problem multilaterally through the UN, Messrs Chirac and Schröder now appear to be trying to sabotage these efforts. ”
	See International Politics is War , above.

4.Economic Planning is War	
15/03/03 p.13	‘ WORLD ECONOMY: BEARING DOWN The case for pre-emptive policy action ’

5.The Consolidation of the EU is War	
05/04/03 p.35	‘The European Union’s expansion is roaring ahead, with destination unknown. Operation EU enlargement is going well. The European Union’s advance into central Europe is meeting little opposition ; the natives are greeting the invading army of Eurocrats with flowers and celebration.

6.Making Peace is War	
01/02/03 p.30	‘The French acknowledge, of course, that America can win on its own a war against Iraq – but winning the peace will mean a sustained effort for which America on its own may, fear the French, have neither the patience nor the means.’
17/05/03 p.9	‘The Saudi bombs do not show that America is losing the peace in the Middle East. But, of course, it may lose the peace. ’
31/05/03 front cover	‘Now, the waging of peace ’

7.Harming the Environment is War	
29/03/03 p.71	‘A few years ago, the (Iraqi) government decided to drain the marshes of lower Mesopotamia, in what amounted to an act of environmental warfare. ’

3.5. Commentary

These novel protometaphors serve diverse and multiple functions. Some metaphors, such as the *invading argument of Eurocrats* simply serve as a backdrop to acclimatize the unconscious to the presence of war in the air. HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT IS WAR is a curious but strangely powerful political protometaphor because it is sure to seduce that great

mass of young and middle-aged people who, though they claim to be apolitical and uninterested in party politics, openly affirm their conviction that we should all be “green”. Our physical environment, the planet, does, obviously, transcend the political environment and the questions political parties debate. Only a monster or an insane or evil force would menace nature, we seem inclined to believe. HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT IS WAR was, of course, absent during the US bombing raids of Serbia which caused acute environmental harm. Such attacks were seen as “catastrophes” and “tragedies”, and thus attributed to fate.

Though Hussein’s government was painted as a “rogue regime” rather than a terrorist, metaphors of terrorism were extremely frequent in *The Economist*. Meanwhile, the most powerful novel metaphor of our époque is probably TRYING TO ERADICATE TERRORISM IS WAR. Colin Powell claimed that in the *war against terrorism* great progress had been made, and his counter-terrorism officer claimed that terrorists *were on the run* (24/05/03 p.41). This metaphor has been promoted so much and has gained such power that it is now no longer seen as a rhetorical strategy but has encrusted itself in the mind-set not only of Americans and Britons but also in the mind-sets of many citizens of countries throughout Europe thanks to the word for word translation of the expression. That it has become fundamental to the implicit workings of the discourse of *The Economist*’s journalists, can be seen in the way they reason *through* the metaphor, seeking its limits but adapting them within the framework of the protometaphor. War against terrorism IS war, they seem to believe, but it is a war of a very special kind, which must be defined: After a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in mid-May 2003, *The Economist* was reasoning: *The fact that it(terrorism) has struck so hard in Saudi Arabia shows only that the war against terrorism will never produce a single, decisive moment of terror*. Like most metaphors, this one has some basis. Terrorists are violent, they do aim to inflict damage to a state, and state’s do, in turn, feel constrained to violently stamp them out or imprison them. However, the manifest inefficiency of the metaphor lies in the fact that, however resolute the government is, no out-and-out, frontal attack is possible and no ultimate victory can be envisaged. Terrorists rarely meet their enemy head-on, and are rarely crushed outright. They can be “hunted down” but not attacked in one great offensive. They rarely agree to peace terms as conventional armies do. Terrorists usually fade away only to reappear, an eternal curse, menacing the established order, unless of course their movement gains popular support, in which case it transforms itself into revolt and aims to take the place of those in power.

One of the most dangerous consequences of the general acceptance of TRYING TO ERADICATE TERRORISM IS WAR as a literal, straight-forward expression, is the way it blurs not only the nature of terrorism and war (which is worrying enough) but the way this blurring spreads to (or contaminates) other concepts. Conjointly with WAR IS CRIME-FIGHTING, TRYING TO ERADICATE TERRORISM IS WAR has greatly affected the way we conceive such words as “terrorist”, “crime”, “murder” and “execution”. Even words like “soldier” become problematic. *The Economist* showed itself very well aware of this danger when it criticized the Bush administration for its vague anti-terrorism laws and it discussed at length the way terrorist suspects were carted off under the category of “enemy combatants”, for an unlimited period of time and denied access to a lawyer (14/12/02, p.44).

What a “citizen” is and what his rights are, depends upon the “crimes” he commits. But as individual governments set up different legislation to deal with terrorism, and as international law emerges and as the US and Europe try to manipulate and acquire jurisdiction over it, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand what a citizen is, what his rights are, and when he commits a “crime”. If he is suspected of being a terrorist, he is transformed into an enemy and as an “enemy”, he comes to be considered as an agent of foreign (and therefore external) forces, though he may in fact be an American citizen.

The Economist evoked the danger of infringing citizens’ rights in the attempt to eradicate terrorism in an article on the US government’s power to monitor its citizens by wiretapping telephones. But *The Economist* immediately added, quoting the conservatives who replied to criticisms that *wars force everybody to rethink the balance between freedom and security* (03/05/02 p.46). In other words, the journalist accepted the conceptual limits imposed upon him by the metaphor rather than contesting whether in peace-time the government had the right to withdraw certain civil liberties that could be suspended during wartime.

Similarly, the laws that protect a citizen can be annulled if the government is not internationally considered to be “legitimate”. In WAR IS CRIME-FIGHTING, “crimes” come to mean acts which outrage world morality, such as the Iraqi’s treatment of its Shia population. But the term “crime” could equally be attributed to acts that Amnesty International condemns, such as Texas executions, of which Bush is a staunch defender.

All of these everyday terms, “crime”, “citizen” and “enemy”, which are fundamental for our democracies, become blurred and politicians thrive on the vagueness to manipulate us and the laws that govern the societies we live in. Though *The Economist* did show some awareness of this fact, its linguistic vigilance did not save it from adopting wholesale the protometaphors

WAR IS CRIME-FIGHTING and TRYING TO ERADICATE TERRORISM IS WAR. And in doing so, their journalists have contributed to the conceptual confusion we are now witnessing. This became obvious in an article on the murder of IRA agents by the British government in their April 26th edition (p.11-12). It must be remembered that the British government has always refused to acknowledge the IRA's struggle as "war". The IRA were always "terrorists" for the government. They rebelled against the legitimate rule of the Crown of the United Kingdom. This was the very reason that sparked the hunger strikes of Bobby Sands and his allies who decided to protest in order to force the government to recognise them as soldiers fighting a war and thereby gain access to rights guaranteed by the Geneva Convention. In commenting on accusations that the government had been implicated in aiding and abetting death squads that had carried out illegal executions, *The Economist* concluded; ***Wars on terrorist organisations are inevitably dirty***. Either you are a legitimate government maintaining order, or you are one party of a violent power-struggle. A government can't have it both ways. It can't refuse to acknowledge terrorists as forming an army and then engage in a dirty war to crush that organisation. Something of the same desire for both legitimacy and access to illegitimate means to reach their ends can be found in both the British government and the Bush administration. No doubt, it is present in all governments, but the protometaphor TRYING TO ERADICATE TERRORISM IS WAR can at times go a long way to extending support for this paradoxical situation and the government's tortuous rhetoric in defending its cause against violent groups. What is especially worrying in the above example is that British history is being reinterpreted through the window of a new American conceptual construct.

3.6. Inversion

Two of the above novel warfare protometaphors deserve special treatment since they fully invert the two terms. A thing becomes its opposite. This is a curious form of metaphor, which seems to defy outright the Aristotelian view that metaphor works by virtue of an intuitively perceived similarity between two things.

Inversion
Pacifism is War
Making the Peace is War

The crowning glory of semantic confusion came in the representation of pacifism, the anti-war movement and the making of the peace after the war all in terms of warfare metaphors. That making peace could be seen in terms of waging a war is indeed curious enough in itself. The justification seems to be that making a lasting peace will take the same unswerving

determination as a war campaign. *Waging the peace* is, it would seem, a daunting task that takes guts, resolute courage and skill. But the representation of those forces which resisted immediate engagement in war in Iraq was even more absurd. Because politics is conceived in terms of war, the anti war movement could *kill* Blair. The only way to *defend* himself against their attacks (which were represented as *bombing raids*, was by *defusing* this *threat*. That Blair may have conceived anti-war supporters as a threat to his career is perfectly possible and understandable, but that such metaphorical reasoning leads us to tar pacifists as terrorists is nonetheless ridiculous.

The protometaphor PACIFISM IS WAR did, quite naturally, extend to both Schröder and Chirac whose attempts to calm things down were seen as *sabotage*. Doubtless the bad faith necessary to sustain this rhetoric was that particularly insidious form of bad faith that shapes our unconscious reasoning and refuses to allow us to see a pretext for what it is. This unconscious reasoning did, however, structure itself along logical lines: Because refusing war was war (of a political kind), then a “peaceful” solution to the political conflict would be the establishment of a consensus-based alliance that would promote the declaration of war. This was the only “solution” both Blair and Bush seemed inclined to accept, and they seem to have found their arguments for that “solution” reasonable enough.

3.7. Is the Switch a Systematic Omnipresent Rhetorical Strategy?

My corpus has allowed me to present a considerable amount of evidence to support the claim that while one thing (war) was being transformed into another, other things were being transformed into it. As I have already said, the impression I had during the autumn of 2002 was that whenever *The Economist* spoke of war, it transformed it into such alternative concepts as problem-solving, accepting a challenge, a game or a film. Is it true then that *The Economist* refused to represent war as war? The answer to this question is a definite NO. Though, in my attempt to demonstrate how *the switch* works, I have quoted metaphors which transform the meaning of war, the term “war” was very much present in discussion of Iraq. In a one and a half page article on the subject in the January 7th edition, for example, *The Economist* used the term no less than twenty seven times. Similarly, when it came to actually fighting the war, *The Economist* called a tank a tank, a bombing raid a bombing raid and gave ample scope to technical military language in discussions of manoeuvres and military strikes.

Though *the switch* is an interesting rhetorical strategy, we should, nevertheless, avoid overestimating its importance. Though I felt it was omnipresent, it was only frequent. And

though I thought it had utterly evacuated the meaning of the term war, it had only contributed to its blurring. Rather than the sole or primary rhetorical strategy used to promote war, *the switch* was merely one of several devices which came into operation. Others were; well-tailored rational arguments in favour of the war, the use of images to present the “defenders” of war in a sympathetic light and images of defenders of peace as aggressive interventionists, the use of alliteration (reminiscent of the “gutter press”) such as *the world awaits the battle for Baghdad* (29/03/03 p.22), *What turned it for Tony* (22/03/03 p.37) and *A fight to the finish* (22/03/03 p.22). This alliteration served to foreground selected phrases that hyped up the apology for war, and gave the arguments for war a sonorous power which, like poetry or advertising jingles, acts on our irrational unconscious. What resounds, somehow seems to us to be apt and right. These phrases were often used as headlines to attract the attention of the reader and focus it on the central argument.

4. Conclusion

The switch can be defined as a recurrent (though not omnipresent) rhetorical strategy which works by transforming one concept into others, while simultaneously allowing other concepts to adopt the primary term. It can be considered a form of semantic transmutation which might be described, by those who prefer formulas, in the following manner:

Switch: A becomes XYZ etc.

While

UVW becomes A

in which,

A = War, in our example

XYZ = for example, Business, Film or Game

UVW = for example, Eradicating terrorism, Politics or Trying to cure disease

It would be a mistake to consider *the switch* to be a simple inversion, since an inversion depends on the direct interchange of two opposites. Rather, inversion can be considered a specific form of semantic switch in which a thing is changed into its opposite. In certain instances, as we saw:

A becomes B

While

B becomes A

in which,

War = A, as in the example given above (3.6.)

Peace = B

I have argued that *the switch* has tended to obscure or blur the definitions of many of the concepts which are fundamental for liberal democracies. The structuring of our societies depends in part on our ability to define exactly what we mean by words like, crime, citizen, law, order, terrorism, terrorist, soldier, nation, regime and war. In the same way, our ability to win allies and form coalitions of like-minded nations concerned with the collective well-being of those coalitions and the citizens of the nations involved, depends upon our ability to find constructive ways of cooperating with other countries and collectively building our understanding of the world, the way it works, as well as the way we make it work, or hope to work upon it. Metaphor is inescapable, and rather than being something we should try to escape from, it should be used constructively to further these ends. In examining my corpus of protometaphors, drawn from *The Economist*, however, I am forced to side with the philosophers in denouncing the sophists who (wittingly or unwittingly) used metaphor to manipulate the representation of war in order to promote it. Certainly, no metaphor is wholly perfect. Metaphors, as Lakoff always repeats, highlight some aspects of a concept but hide others. In the case of war rhetoric, it became difficult to see around the rhetoric, difficult to remind ourselves that we were not getting the whole picture.

The Economist has not been unflinching in its support for war. But though it did begin to learn the first steps of some fancy footwork when it began to criticise Bush and Blair for exaggerating the danger of Iraq when no weapons were found, it did not feel obliged to concede that it had itself been party to the war hype. On the contrary, it made an abrupt about-turn and turned on the side it had been defending all along. Rather dishonestly, it profited in this way from the fact that both war and criticism of world leaders both sell papers. That it was responsible for forming the opinions of a great number of intelligent readers and conditioning the concepts they think with did not seem to be something the magazine was willing to take responsibility for. But the responsibility for the clarity of concepts such as war, crime and citizen is something that should not be casually brushed to one side.

In a confusing blurring and transmutation of meanings, the content of these words was contaminated. The extent of this confusion can be seen by the strange pleonasm that began to appear. In one edition of *The Economist* (1503/03, p.65) we were invited to consider *The dangers of war*. Though the article was concerned with the impact of the war on consumption, the stressing that war could be dangerous – a pleonasm as grotesque as “my female grandmother” – shows to what extent the term war has been emptied of what most people would consider to be its original, precise and definite meaning.

As meanings slip and slide, concepts are corrupted and the metaphors that we put into play begin to play with us. It is not a question of escaping metaphors, but of lucidly adopting them and adapting them to fashion our reality, the ways we perceive the world and the ways we wish to act within it as citizens, as nations and as a world community (if such a thing can be envisaged). The way we construct our worldviews is inseparable from metaphor, but the clash of cultures has, in recent months, tended to consolidate not mutual comprehension, but conspiracy theories, fear of enemies (imagined and real), contempt of allies. It has clouded our judgement as to the place we hold in society and the role our countries should play in the world.

As I pointed out in section 3.1., it has not been my intention to take an anti-war stance. I have simply sought to understand the complex way in which a stance emerges through the interpenetration of concepts in articles on widely different subjects in a quality political magazine during wartime. A great deal of rhetorical skill was mobilised in the promotion of war. No doubt many journalists felt a kind of elation in the linguistic pleasure of playing with words. But playing with words is a dangerous game. And for those who feel a certain affection for metaphors that characterise war as a game, it seems rather sad that such people really do need to be reminded that war is not much fun when you are the one forced to play.

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