

Dynamic Processes from the 9/11 to Iraq War between the U.S. Policy, the Media and Public Opinion : An Analysis through *Conscience Collective*

IIDA Takafumi

The United States declared the “War on Terror” after the September 11 Attacks in 2001. The military attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq were launched. The attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was conducted due to the grounds that the regime protected the militant Islamist organization al-Qaeda and its founder Usama bin Ladin who had been considered as mastermind of 9/11 terrorist attacks. More or less at the same time, based on the “suspicion” of having ties with terrorists and possessing weapons of mass destruction, military campaigns against Iraq under Saddam Hussein’s government were put into action in 2003 after going through several processes.

How did the war against Iraq, the country without any relation to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, come to be decided on the U.S. policy and endorsed by the Congress, the media and public opinion in the U.S.?

This article intends to elucidate this problem through Emile Durkheim’s theory of *conscience collective*.

Conscience collective is a consciousness *sui generis* of a group that emerges from and acts upon individual consciousness. On the one hand it is referred to as order or moral conscience, but on the other hand it also takes forms of violence, revolution and war. Consciousness shared by people comes to possess the fixed “collective” characteristics by being given a certain symbolic expression, meaning and direction. *Conscience collective* also has dynamism of influencing people’s acts and a cause of energy, which is called *force collective*. The concepts of

conscience collective and *force collective* work as a unit. They carry out various social functions in society as if they were one unit of representation and energy.

In modern warfare, the backing of public opinion for a government's war policy is a necessary requirement.

In the United States, the 9/11 terrorist attacks violated national sense of value and provoked the strong shared emotions, such as fear, panic, grief and anger. President Bush pointed out the "enemy" at once and declared the "War on Terror."

Once the "enemy" is presented, the strong emotions are directed toward, transferred to and adhere to the target. People's collective emotions form enormous *conscience collective* through identifying the "enemy" as evil. This *conscience collective* is given the directions such as a "just war against evil" and the "War on Terror" while carrying a big energy (*force collective*), and it starts to move toward a certain instructed direction. In such process, passions, enthusiasm and prejudices account for a larger portion than reason.

There was no hard evidence linking the government of Iraq with terrorists and weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, fabrication of evidence and replacing causes were done by the U.S administration.

Policies are decided through calculation of interests and a power struggle. If the interests of a political group, the energy industry and the military industry, and the media coincide, gaining the support of and mobilizing people to warfare become feasible through manipulation of information.

Is it not considered that *conscience collective* and *force collective* primarily means the power of people (demos kratia ; democracy)? However, as it is described in this article, it could cause severe damage to people if political power manipulates it toward warfare. How is it possible to avoid such a chain reaction that leads to a war? There are several points to be discussed such as freedom of speech, religious tolerance, clarification of responsibility for a war and preserving a peace constitution but each topic has opposition, which is not easy to overcome.