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Synopsis Dinner With Jina

Jina and I had a long conversation last Wednesday. Our conversation happened at two levels: current events in the beginning and how to reason about the news we are fed through the mainstream media.

We started off with war with Iraq. We asked each other whether we thought that the war was truly inevitable. We both concurred that it would happen. Jina noted that we don't have a choice, the Bush administration is hell bent on it. We discussed the circus-like presentation that Colin Powell gave to the UN Security Council, and how the Picasso painting *Güernica* had to be covered for Powell to give his presentation. I asked her what she thought about the intervention in Afghanistan in late 2001, whether she thought that was justified. She indicated that she did and I brought up that we do not have a good way to access the civilian casualties there because we drop bombs and make mathematical models to guess the damage and satellite photos to estimate the number of buildings destroyed. She thought that once we had started bombing that type of audit was counterproductive because the "populace" would reduce popular support as happened in Vietnam. Finally we discussed about our leaders and what drives them and the fact that they are human too. They feel the same insecurity about their careers, the need to establish personal identity, jealousy, and personal allegiance. This can greatly skew their decisions, which unfortunately affect all of us.