

# *"Draining The Swamps"—Why The War In Iraq Was Just*

**T**he war in Iraq needs to be viewed as a subset of the larger "War on Terror" that began on September 11, 2001 in a sneak attack that took the lives of thousands of Americans in New York City, Washington, D.C. and rural Pennsylvania. It is unfortunate that many do not see it this way. This article is designed to help these folks see the error of their way.

Although most who died on 9/11 were innocent civilians, whose only crime was to get up and go to work that fateful morning, to their enemies they were "infidels" who deserved to die horrible and fiery deaths. Consequently, when both towers of the World Trade Center collapsed, Osama bin Laden gloated over the deaths of three thousand innocent people who had become the objects of his hatred of America. To bin Laden and a multitude of Muslims around the world who celebrated this so-called "glorious deed," these innocent civilians were not just murdered horribly, but they were effectively robbed of what they were on that frightful day: workers from more than eighty-six countries simply doing their jobs in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon *and* businesspeople, retirees, children, and grandparents traveling coast to coast on four airliners. Instead, they were simply "the enemy" (Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bin Laden, on Tape, Boasts of Trade Center Attacks; U.S. Says It Proves His Guilt," *New York Times*, December 14, 2001, pp. 1, B4). Consequently, they were stripped of their status as noncombatants—a status that would have provided them the protection against intentional targeting and assault provided by any reading of just war theory, whether it be the reading advocated by Western culture or the Islamic world.

But before proceeding any further it needs to be pointed out that although there are similarities and overlaps in Western and Islamic just war theories, the assimilation is not as clear as some think. For example, Bassam Tibi, a Muslim and professor of international relations who has written on Islam, war, and modernity has said:

[The] Western distinction between just and unjust wars linked to specific grounds for war is unknown in Islam. Any war against unbelievers, whatever its immediate ground, is morally justified. Only in this sense can one distinguish just and unjust wars in Islamic tradition. When Muslims wage war for the dissemination of Islam, it is a just war.... When non-Muslims attack Muslims, it is an unjust war. The usual Western interpretation of jihad as a "just war" in the Western sense is, therefore, a misreading of this Islamic concept" ("War and Peace in

Islam,” in Terry Nardin, ed., *The Ethics of War and Peace*, 1996, pp. 128-45, in Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*, 2003, p. 131).

This is not to say that there are no moral restraints on the conduct of war within classic or traditional Islam. There are, but these restraints reflect more upon the appeal to a warrior's honor than to a soldier's sense of justice. This is a point that Michael Ignatieff makes in his book *The Warrior's Honor* (1997, p. 147). He says that the intentional slaughter of civilians, according to the warrior's honor code, is a dishonorable thing. Nevertheless, he admits that this idea is a difficult one to impress upon those trained in the rhetoric of modern Islamic jihad (see also Tibi, p. 133). Traditionally, the primary goal of the Islamic warrior when fighting against unbelievers was to force them to submit to Islam, not to destroy them. However, this goal has been lost in modern Islamist fundamentalism. Therefore, although it is fair to say that classical Islam placed certain moral restraints on military conduct that were similar to our Western just war theory, even when these wars were fought against non-Muslims, when one turns to contemporary discussions of this issue among Muslims, “one is struck with the scarcity of *jus in bello* [i.e., just conduct in war] materials” (John Kelsay, *Islam and War: A Study in Comparative Ethics*, 1993, p. 45).

Consequently, there is a crisis within Islam today that has been described as a battle between *Islam*, which reflects the classical view, and *Islamism*, which mirrors the radical fundamentalist world view we see being manifested today. Will the Islamic moderates, who do in fact have a rich tradition of tolerance and respect for human life, win the battle for their religion, or will the radical fundamentalists win the day? If the latter, then radical jihadists will continue to be hunted down and destroyed. In the process, many good, honest and peaceful Muslims will suffer in the War on Terror—a war that will eventually escalate into a battle of momentous import. In fact, and in anticipation of the radical fundamentalists' continued influence within Islam, some have already started calling the current War on Terror “World War IV” (see a statement made by ex-CIA director James Woolsey to a group of college students at the University of California at Los Angeles on April 2, 2003 identifying the cold war as World War III and the War on Terror as World War IV, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/04/03/sprj.irq.woolsey.world.war>). Thus, the more virulent Islamism becomes, the more difficult life will be for both moderate Muslims and the rest of us so-called “infidels.” Consequently, although moderate Muslims, who by every estimation remain the overwhelming majority within Islam today, feel threatened and intimidated by the jihadis (radical fundamentalists) in their midst, they must, for their own good, begin to speak out against and resist those who have hijacked their religion.

With this said, the stark contrast between “us” (viz., the West, including moderate Muslims) and “them” (viz., the militant jihadis) should now be quite clear: On one side we have the unequivocal, non-nuanced condemnation of an intentional attack using vehicles of peaceful travel (viz., commercial airlines) against buildings in which commerce was conducted and people worked to support their families. On the other side, we have the reveling in, and joyous celebration of, vicious, heartless attacks against innocent non-combatants. The difference is both fundamental and telling, and how we describe the 9/11 attacks determines how we speak of the attackers. In other words, were the 9/11 hijackers murderers, as we say, or martyrs, as they say?

To glorify as martyrs those whose primary purpose was, and is, to murder as many unarmed civilians as possible, is to foist upon the civilized world a morally distorted world view—a view

that would provoke, if the West held to the same view, turning the cities and villages of the Muslim world into a lifeless mass of rubble (“pounding the rubble,” as some say). The awesome, unmatched superiority of the West’s military might is not questioned by anyone who is still in his right mind. Therefore, it is clear that the West, headed by the United States of America, has the capacity to turn the Muslim world into a “parking lot,” if it so desired. Thankfully, and I’m sure much to the relief of millions upon millions of non-jihadi Muslims around the world, the West has no such desire, and this is the very difference a Biblical world view makes—a world view that entertains no thoughts of enslaving or eradicating the Muslim world. Thus, in his speech to the nation on September 20th, 2001, President Bush—although already being criticized in the Muslim world and the European media for a slip of the tongue in an impromptu press conference soon after the attacks, where he said, in part, “...this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while”—made it crystal clear that the War on Terror was not a total war, a holy war, or even an attack on Islam. To Muslims everywhere, he said officially and distinctively:

We respect your faith. It’s practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Islam. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them” (“Address to a Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001,” in *Our Mission and Our Moment: Speeches Since the Attacks of September 11, 2002*, pp. 9-15).

Having worked and lived in other places of the world, I want to say that I have Muslim acquaintances, some of whom I count as friends, who have on numerous occasions gone out of their way to demonstrate kindness and civility to me. In fact, some of the kindest deeds bestowed upon me and my wife have been performed by Muslims—deeds that ultimately aided me in the preaching the gospel in difficult times and places. Furthermore, those Muslims who aren’t my personal friends are, as the Bible so clearly teaches me, my neighbors (cf. Luke 10:25-37). Consequently, I am obligated to do unto my Muslim neighbors as I would have them do unto me (cf. Matthew 7:12). So, when I hear Christians talking about the need to make Baghdad, Kabul, Teheran, or Damascus “a parking lot,” it sorely vexes my spirit. This is no way for a Christian, whether he be a civilian or soldier, to be thinking or talking, and Christians who have crossed over to the dark side in my presence have been rebuked for such un-Christ-like thinking.

These personal observations are not, as some might think, a digression from the subject before us. Instead, they are an appropriate contextualization of the subject, for in attempting to defend what I believe to have been a just war in Iraq, I cannot deny the truths taught in God’s word. I cannot attempt a justification of the Iraq War by denying *who* and *what* I am: a Christian *first* and an American *second*. Consequently, any justification of the war with Iraq must be consistent with the New Testament’s teaching on the Christian’s duty to neighbor and government, along with the government’s God-given obligations to do justice and uphold righteousness.

The Bible says, “Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). This means that the righteous acts of Christians are not only important to the personal salvation of Christians themselves, but to the preservation of our nation as well. What happens, then, when the salt loses its savor? Jesus clearly answered this question when He

said it was good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men (cf. Matthew 5:13).

To permit a murder to occur when it could have been prevented is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have deterred it is an evil. To watch an act of cruel abuse of a child without stepping in to end it is morally inexcusable. God's word says, “Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin” (James 4:17, NRSV). A man who will not protect his wife and children against a violent intruder, even when he believes the Bible prohibits him from doing so (as one who is a consistent, total pacifist would have to do), fails them miserably. And although it is true that a pacifist who rightly defended his wife and children would sin by doing so, in that he would be violating his own conscience (cf. Romans 14:22-23), he would, nevertheless, be sinning if he didn't. Therefore, the pacifist's “damned if you do; damned if you don't” dilemma should amply demonstrate the importance of getting this issue right. God's word, when properly interpreted, does not create such moral dilemmas.

Likewise, any government that has the means to defend its citizens against a foreign aggressor and fails to do so is morally delinquent. Even as justice demands a life for a life in capital crimes, the same logic can be extended to the unjust actions of nations, and this means that a government has a moral duty to take punitive actions against an aggressor nation, with Hitler being a notable case in point. It would have been morally wrong for the Allied Forces (in this case a group of aggrieved nations) not to have resisted Nazi Germany. To ordain government, as God clearly did (cf. Romans 13), and then prohibit it from doing what it has been ordained to do, would deny the very right of the government to exist at all, which would, in turn, be a direct contradiction of what the Bible said about God-ordained government. Therefore, the pacifist position cannot be right!

Thus, instead of making the government's work harder by attempting to prohibit its God-given right to use deadly force, Christians should be willing to uphold the government's righteous hand as it does justice (cf. 1 Peter 2:14; Titus 3:1; Romans 13:1-7). However, I do not believe one's citizenship should ever interfere with the Christian's duty to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 5:29). Consequently, if the justification for the war with Iraq was invalid, then it would have to be condemned by every right thinking Christian. In other words, there are times when a Christian must refuse to serve his country, and that if he didn't do so, he would be involving himself in sin. If one's government embarks upon an unjust war, the Christian could not, without sin, actively participate in it. This, then, goes to the very heart of the question: Was the Iraq War just, or not?

Perhaps you haven't picked up on it yet, but I have been referring to the Iraq War in the past tense. For like President Bush, I believe the war with Iraq is over, and that we won. Therefore, and despite what the critics continue to say, the “Mission Accomplished” sign that stood behind President Bush aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln* when he gave a speech on the flight deck to returning sailors, marines and airmen on May 1, 2003, ought to have been understood in the context of the Iraq War which, with the fall of Baghdad and the dissipation of any organized resistance from Saddam's forces, was a clear victory for Coalition Forces. However, Bush said in that speech that “The Battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September 11th, 2001, and still goes on.” He went on to say:

Any person involved in committing or planning terrorist attacks against the American people becomes an enemy of this country, and a target of American justice. Any person,

organization, or government that supports, protects, or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent, and equally guilty of terrorist crimes.

Making it clear that the United States would not hesitate to use force against other terrorist threats, he said:

The use of force has been and remains our last resort. Yet all can know, friend and foe alike, that our nation has a mission. We will answer threats to our security and we will defend the peace.

He further said:

The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.

Finally, Bush shifted into the first person, and said:

I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it. I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people. The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

With these words, the *Bush Doctrine* was clearly and succinctly articulated.

However, the purpose of this article is not to defend the War on Terror, *per se*, which I think most right-thinking people already believe to be a just war. The task, instead, is to show why the Iraq War was just. This, it seems, is the more difficult position to defend, even in the minds of many who acknowledge the legitimacy of the larger War on Terror. To these, the Iraq War is troubling primarily because they have not been able to see the linkage of Iraq to the events of 9/11.

I'll have more to say about this linkage in a moment, but before doing so, let me emphasize this point: The Iraq War is over. Saddam's military was soundly defeated and his government is no more. But although we clearly won the war, we have not yet secured the peace. The guerrilla war that is now underway in Iraq, a war that involves some leftovers from the Saddam regime (Baathists and the like), insurgents from outside Iraq and hard-core terrorists (from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Chechnya), has been deadly, troubling, and costly. According to British officials, as reported in the *London Times*: “These are not just zealots who grabbed a gun and went to the front line. They know how to employ guerrilla tactics so someone had to have trained them. They are certainly organized, and if it's not bin Laden's people, it's al-Qaeda by another name. But they certainly came here to fight the West” (reported in Yossef Bodansky, *The Secret History of the Iraq War*, 2004, p. 278). Therefore, the present conflict must be seen, as it is by al-Qaeda and other radical fundamentalist Muslim nations and organizations, as the global, total war they believe it to be—World War IV.

This was hinted at by Andrew Sullivan as early as October 7th, 2001 when, writing in the *New York Times Magazine* under the title “This Is a Religious War,” he said:

This coming conflict is indeed as momentous and as grave as the last major conflicts, against Nazism and Communism, and it is not hyperbole to see it in these epic terms. What is at stake is yet another battle against a religion that is succumbing to the temptation Jesus refused in the desert—to rule by force. The difference is that this conflict is against a more formidable enemy than Nazism or Communism. The secular totalitarianisms of the 20th century were, in President Bush's memorable words, “discarded lies.” They were fundamentalisms built on the very weak intellectual conceits of a master race and a Communist revolution. But Islamic fundamentalism is based on a glorious civilization and a great faith. It can harness and co-opt and corrupt true and good believers if it has a propitious and toxic enough environment (pp. 44-57).

In a videotaped message shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden claimed that God Almighty himself had struck America through a group of “vanguard Muslims.” The end is clear, he thundered: to destroy America (reported in Elsthain, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86).

As Norman Podhoretz said in an article in *Commentary Magazine*:

This new enemy has already attacked us on our own soil—a feat neither Nazi Germany nor Soviet Russia ever managed to pull off—and openly announces his intention to hit us again, only this time with weapons of infinitely greater and deadlier power than those used on 9/11. His objective is not merely to murder as many of us as possible and to conquer our land. Like the Nazis and Communists before him, he is dedicated to the destruction of everything good for which America stands. It is this, then, that we...have a responsibility to uphold and are privileged to defend (“World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, And Why We Have to Win,” September 2004).

As I've already said, the first front in the War on Terror, the military campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime that provided it with “aid and safe haven,” met relatively little opposition either here at home or abroad. This was because it was easily justified as a retaliatory strike against the terrorists who had attacked us, and there was, in turn, very little sympathy for the Taliban. Yes, within weeks observers, like R.W. Apple of the *New York Times*, rushed to conjure up the “ghost of Vietnam,” arguing we were once again being sucked into a “quagmire.” Well, it didn't happen, much to the chagrin of these critics. The terrifying psychological effect of 15,000-pound “Daisy Cutter” bombs that exploded just above the ground, wiping out everything for hundreds of yards, and the incredible precision of “smart-bomb” technology that was directed by “spotters” on the ground equipped with radios, laptops, and lasers, produced a devastating blow to a much-touted, battled-hardened enemy, while producing very few civilian casualties.

Unfortunately, Osama bin Laden was not captured and al-Qaeda was not totally destroyed, but it was dealt a devastating blow by the campaign in Afghanistan. Furthermore, on October 9th, 2004, despite inclement weather (two inches of snow in some places) and threats of spectacular attacks by terrorist insurgents, millions of Afghans turned out to vote for a president in their first taste of democracy. According to the *Army New Service*, a woman from the village of Raban said: “The Taliban burned my house, they kicked us out of [town]. Now I have freedom. I'm standing in front of you and voting. Of course my life has been changed” (Master Sgt. Terry

Anderson, "Millions Vote in Afghan Elections," October 12, 2004). To me, this sounds like success, and it sends a strong message to countries that give safe haven to terrorists and, when given the chance, refuse to clean them out, that they are asking to be overthrown in favor of new leaders with democratic aspirations. The Afghan campaign proved that, instead of only being able to react in the law-enforcement mode that had proved so ineffective prior to 9/11, the military option was open, available for use, and lethally effective.

In his September 20th, 2001 speech, President Bush had said, "We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism." But in his *State of the Union* speech on January 29th, 2002, he was even more explicit:

We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.

Upon hearing this, it should have been clear to anyone that Mr. Bush, as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, was not willing to just sit around waiting for another 9/11 strike. Instead, he was now willing to take preemptive action. Although this was a logical extension of what he had said earlier, it went largely unnoticed until his June 1st, 2002 speech to the graduating class at West Point, when he placed his right to preemption in historical context:

For much of the last century, America's defense relied on the cold-war doctrine of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend.

Although this covered al-Qaeda and other such groups, he then went on to explain why the old doctrines could not work with Saddam's regime in Iraq: "Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons or missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies." He went on to say: "We cannot defend our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in tyrants, who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties, and then systematically break them." He then concluded:

If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.... [T]he war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.

Officially, the Bush administration was denying that it had reached any definite decision about what to do with Saddam Hussein, but everyone seemed to know that, in promising to act, he was zeroing in on him. Unlike Afghanistan, the thought of invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein provoked a firestorm. It was immediately argued that the whole idea of preemptive action by the U.S. was not just a dangerous precedent, but was a violation of international law.

Now, if 9/11 changed the paradigm for post-Cold War international relations, as President Bush claimed, and I believe it did, then it was no longer prudent or morally defensible to simply

sit back and wait for threats to fully develop, when such threats involved the potential loss of massive numbers of innocent civilians. Historically, there is nothing new about preemption. The President was simply drawing on nearly two hundred years of national history over the course of which preemption was both advocated and implemented. As Jean Bethke Elshtain pointed out in her excellent book *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*:

The cries that preemption is something brand-new and a radical departure from the past do not bear up under close scrutiny. That does not make preemption right, of course, or justifiable by definition. But preempting horrific possibilities is very much in the air these days in debates among international relations and international law experts (p. 191).

She went on to say:

What the just war tradition insists upon is that when states act, they do so under the rubric of just war requirements. In this way, argue just war thinkers, states are obligated to conduct their affairs with restraint, to justify themselves within a framework of ethical criteria, and to use those criteria as ongoing evaluative tools for their own activities (*ibid.*).

Now, having spent some time looking at history and philosophy, I realize I haven't yet set forth the reasons why I believe the Iraq War was just. My efforts so far have been to show that (1) the Iraq War—although a real war (and by this I mean a traditional war fought by national entities)—needs to be seen as a subset of the larger global War on Terror, (2) that the Iraq War was a war that was won by Coalition Forces, and (3) that we ought to see the post-war terrorist activities in Iraq as not simply an extension of a regional conflict, but as a continuation of the greater, global War on Terror—World War IV, if you will. With this said, let's turn our attention to a justification of the Iraq War.

In order to be just, under the *jus ad bellum* criteria of just war theory:

- A war must be a response to an act of aggression or the threat of such.
- A war must be openly declared.
- A war must begin with the right intentions, intentions that desire a more just, hence peaceful, world.
- A war should be a last resort after other options have been considered seriously. Other measures do not need to have been tried, in turn, but they must have been considered.

Notice, if you will, that these criteria *assume* that the state is the decision-making entity. This is important because so many opponents of the Iraq War have argued that “only” the UN, or a collectivity of some sort that included the French and Germans, could “legitimately” declare war. Such thinking is one-world-ism gone to seed and violates the principles of international law. It even contradicts the UN Charter, which presumes that its members are sovereign entities that have the right to defend themselves, and this means they have the right to determine in what that defense consists. Some may wish to disagree, but to claim that a state acting alone has no

right to do so (the word being thrown around a lot today is “unilateralism”), is to deny the very right of the state to exist at all, and is just plain silliness. So, the idea that the United States acted illegally by invading Iraq because it did not have UN approval to do so, does not comport with either the sovereign rights of states or the precepts of international law.

Therefore, President Bush, as Commander-in Chief of the armed forces of the United States of America, had the right—when failing to secure U.N. approval and believing Saddam's regime a real and present danger to the security of the United States and its allies—to direct an invasion of Iraq. He made it clear from the very beginning of the conflict that our fight was not with the Iraqi people, but with the regime of a murderous tyrant who needed to be removed from power for the benefit of all nations of goodwill and the Iraqi people themselves. However, it is precisely at this point—namely, whether or not Saddam's regime really posed a preeminent treat—that we find the most controversy.

As we've now been told, there were no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, and there was absolutely no connection between Saddam's regime and al-Qaeda or other terrorist organizations. Because this is misinformation is widely believed by many, it is time to examine these claims.

With reference to WMD and the Saddam Hussein-Osama bin Laden connection, there was universal agreement prior to the Iraq War that Saddam's regime had WMD and it was further known in intelligence circles that there had been ongoing cooperation between Saddam's intelligence services and bin Laden's terrorists since the early 1990s, when the jihadist forces in Somalia, under the command of Ayman al-Zawahiri, received extensive military assistance from the Iraqis via Sudan (see Yossef Bodansky, *The Secret History of the Iraq War*, 2004, p. 1). Mr. Bodansky, who was director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare for more than a decade, longtime director of research at the International Strategic Studies Association, and senior editor for the Defense and Foreign Affairs group of publications, has impeccable intelligence *bona fides*. He is not a Bushite, by any means, and has been critical of the Bush Administration's handling of the Iraq War, nevertheless, has written:

The [Saddam-bin Laden] alliance was solidified in 1998-99, as Saddam and bin Laden realized that they needed each other's resources in order to confront the United States. Moreover, Iraq (working in conjunction with Yasser Arafat) had resolved to throw the Middle East into chaos—a move that threatened to imperil vital interests of America and its allies. The war Saddam Hussein contemplated, which included the use of weapons of mass destruction, would have caused inestimable damage to the global economy by disrupting energy supplies from the Persian Gulf (*ibid.*).

He went on to say:

In the fall of 2002 Iraq crossed an unacceptable threshold, supplying operational weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to bin Laden's terrorists. These developments were confirmed to the Western intelligence services after several terrorists—graduates of WMD training programs—were captured in Israel, Chechnya, Turkey, and France, along with documents related to their activities. On the basis of pure threat analysis, the United States should have gone to war against Iraq, as well as its partners Syria and Iran, in fall 2002. By then there

was already unambiguous evidence indicating the urgency of defusing the imminent danger posed by Iraq and its primary allies in the growing terrorist conspiracy.

And:

As mighty as it is, however, America does not exist in a vacuum. Not without reason, the Bush administration elected to first attempt to build wider support for an American-led war, and undertaking that pushed the opening hostilities to spring 2003 (*op. cit.*, pp. 1-2).

I'll have more to say of the specific situation which Bodansky mentioned in a moment. But before doing so, it needs to be pointed out that in April 2003, al-Qaeda's Center for Islamic Studies published a propaganda piece, entitled “The Crusaders' War Against Iraq,” which stressed the Islamist role in Iraq. It argued that the American war against Iraq was but one facet of the fateful confrontation between Islam and the United States, and regardless of the outcome of the battle for Baghdad, “the battle is going to take place in various stages, and the stage we believe will exhaust the enemy has not come yet.” “Therefore,” the study went on to say, “we need to think practically about the way we can join the battle and support the Iraqi resistance force, which has so far exhibited enormous resistance, causing shock, fear, and confusion among the enemy.” “The Nation's duty today,” *and they are hear speaking of all Muslims*, “is to maintain the state of shock and fear among the enemy that has invaded Muslim countries” (Bodansky, pp. 276-77).

About the same time, Thabit bin Qays, who was al-Qaeda's new media coordinator, elaborated on the subject in an e-mail addressed to the Saudi-owned, London-based magazine *al-Majallah*. In it, Thabit said “al-Qaeda's command is watching closely the events in Iraq as they unfold” (*op. cit.*, p. 277). In fact, he acknowledged that al-Qaeda was *already* involved in the war: “Our activities are connected with the events in Iraq,” but all further details were “a matter concerning the leader of al-Qaeda, Sheikh Osama bin Laden, [and] will be announced when the right time comes.” A short time later, an audio tape from bin Laden surfaced in Pakistan on which he said, “The United States has attacked Iraq, and soon it will also attack Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan.” In response to that danger, he called upon Muslims everywhere to wage a total war against the United States (*ibid.*). He reserved his highest praise for suicide attackers: “I am proud of those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Islam,” adding that their primary contribution was in setting an example for a new generation of Muslims to emulate.

Now, let's turn our attention to the *casus belli* (or reason for war) of which Bodansky wrote in his extraordinary book. Most of you will recall from news reports that on January 14th, 2003, British police and security forces raided a terrorist safe house in Manchester, England in which a quantity of ricin, an extremely potent poison, was found. During the raid, a Scotland Yard detective was killed. Bodansky reveals that the investigation that brought about this raid had begun in Israel in the fall of 2002 and involved, at its peak, the intelligence services of more than six countries (see the chapter in Bodansky's book entitled “Casus Belli,” pp. 51-84). “The investigators' findings,” according to Bodansky, “provided the 'smoking gun' supporting the administration's insistence on Iraq's centrality to global terrorism, the availability of operational weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and proof of the close cooperation between Iraqi military intelligence and al-Qaeda” (p. 51).

However, instead of using the data accumulated during the ensuing investigation to put to rest the mounting international criticism and skepticism in the media, the Bush administration decided to accommodate Prime Minister Tony Blair's strong pressure to keep Israel at arms' length, not to expose the complicity of Yassar Arafat and the Palestinian Authority that had been exposed during the investigation, and placate Blair's fellow West European leaders. Consequently, the American public was not presented with one of the strongest and clearest justifications for war with Iraq.

It all started when Israeli Special Forces, on the night of September 13th, 2002, captured a three-man squad attempting to cross the Jordan River and enter the Palestinian territories on their way to Arafat's compound in Ramallah. Their subsequent interrogations—and the Israelis are well-known for successes in this area—revealed they were highly trained members of the Baghdad-based Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and that they had been sent to conduct spectacular strikes under the banner of Arafat's Fatah (“Fatah” is a reverse acronym of the Arabic *Harekat at-Tahrir al-Wataniyyeh al-Falastiniyyeh*, and means “conquest by means of jihad”). The ALF, although not a well-publicized organization, is a vehicle through which Saddam's regime has distributed millions of dollars to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers or “martyrs,” as they are called by the Islamists. Specifically, they had been dispatched by ALF Chief Muhammad Zaidan Abbas (aka, Abu-al-Abbas) to operate directly under the control of Tawfiq Tirawi, chief of the Palestinian Authority's General Intelligence Service, and Arafat's closest confidant. Abbas and Tirawi were very close childhood friends, having grown up together in a village just north of Ramallah, where they eventually joined Arafat's fledgling terrorist organization, al-Fatah, in the early 1960s.

The task of the three ALF terrorists, it was learned, was multi-operational, including using shoulder-fired missiles to shoot down civilian airlines as they took off from and approached Ben-Gurion Airport and using anti-tank rockets and missiles to ambush convoys, including American units on their way to Iraq. In addition, they were to organize and train Palestinian terrorists—all trusted operatives of Tirawi's—to assist in operations and intelligence gathering inside Israel. They said that when they had been briefed in Baghdad, they were told they would receive all the equipment and weapons they needed from al-Fatah via Tirawi.

During the previous summer, they said, they had received, along with other squads of ALF terrorists, special training at Salman Pak—a highly secret terrorist training facility southeast of Baghdad where both Iraqis and non-Iraqi Arabs received training on hijacking planes and trains, planting explosives in cities, sabotage, and assassinations—by the infamous Unit 999, an ultra-secret Iraqi special forces “deep penetration” unit that was tasked by Saddam with both domestic and foreign operations, and was part of the *Al-Istikhbarat al-Askariyya* (Special Branch of Iraqi Military Intelligence). They recounted that in an adjacent part of the camp, other teams of Unit 999 were training a select group of terrorists specifically identified as members of al-Qaeda. Although their training was separate, and those involved used code names, they were able to learn a lot about the missions of their Islamist cohorts. The three ALF terrorists told the Israelis that their jihadi colleagues received elaborate training in chemical weapons and poisons, especially ricin. As they moved to deploy, they were moved into areas under the control of Ansar-al-Islam, Osama bin Laden's Kurdish offshoot. There they experimented with chemical weapons and poisons. From there, the ALF said, the jihadis traveled to Turkey, where they were to strike American bases with chemical weapons once the war started, and to Pankisi in northern Georgia (on the border with Chechnya) to aid Chechen terrorists as they launched major terror-

ist operations against Russia. Others were dispatched to train jihadi teams arriving from Western Europe via Turkey in sophisticated terrorism techniques, including the use of chemical weapons and ricin.

Soon there was independent confirmation of the information being provided by the ALF terrorists. Turkish security forces, acting on tips from the Israelis, arrested two al-Qaeda operatives poring over plans to attack the U.S. airbase at Incirlick with chemical weapons, and American intelligence also learned from their own independent sources about the activities of foreign mujahedin in Georgia's Pakinsky Gore. Then, and who can forget it, on October 23rd, a group of Chechen and Arab terrorists captured a Moscow theater in the middle of a performance. In the process, they took over seven hundred people hostage, rigging the theater with bombs and threatening to kill everyone in the building. When negotiations failed and the terrorist shot at least one of the hostages to demonstrate their determination, Russian anti-terrorist forces broke into the theater after using a special knockout gas to neutralize the Chechens before they were able to detonate their bombs, which was considered to be the salvation of most of the hostages. Nevertheless, almost two hundred hostages died from the secondary effects of the gas, including heart attacks and choking on their own vomit. However, the mere occurrence of a spectacular strike in Moscow meant that there could no longer be any doubt about the accuracy of the information provided by the three Palestinians in Israel's custody.

Even so, the White House was still reluctant to advertise what they knew because it would expose Israeli involvement, and it was trying to do everything it could to keep the Israelis out of the War on Terror for fear it would deter the participation of Arab and Muslim countries in the forming coalition. Even so, Israel was quietly sharing the acquired data with several European governments, leading to the eventual disruption and capture of several Arab and Chechen terrorist networks in Paris, London, and Manchester, as well as related support networks in Spain and Italy. Chemical weapons and ricin had played important roles in the disruption of all these networks, which had, in turn, been trained in Georgia's Pakinsky Gore. And so when ricin was discovered in the Manchester raid, all the dots connected and the Israeli intelligence was proven totally correct. Consequently, on the eve of war with Iraq, the intelligence services of the Western European governments knew that Saddam Hussein's regime needed to be toppled, and that it needed to be done sooner rather than later.

Even so, most Western European governments, for a variety of reasons (some of which involved their own complicity) staunchly refused to address Iraqi training of al-Qaeda terrorists in the use of chemical weapons and poisons. Further, the public acknowledgment of this evidence would have exposed the intimate involvement of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority in international terrorism, something they did not want to do for political and other nefarious reasons. Moreover, in the winter of 2002, Tony Blair led the European effort to salvage Arafat, actually rewarded him with a Palestinian state in hopes of demonstrating that the War on Terror was not indiscriminately anti-Arab or anti-Muslim. The rest is history, as they say. Having to choose between further alienating the Western Europeans, who were insistent in keeping Arafat out of it, and bolstering its case against Iraq by providing the concrete Israeli evidence, Mr. Bush, in what I consider to be a serious misstep, decided to go with the Europeans.

So, on February 5th, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell, in his speech to the UN, showed an aerial shot of the Ansar-al-Islam facility, which he identified as a “poison and explosive training center.” When foreign media pointed out the derelict status of the facility, Washington re-

mained silent rather than hint at evidence that would confirm Powell's claim but also prove Arafat's involvement in Iraqi terrorism and WMD, and that would have pointed directly to Israel's contribution to the effort to disarm Iraq.

Does this mean that I believe the President “lied” about his reason for toppling Saddam Hussein? No, it doesn't. On the contrary, he had every reason to believe Saddam's regime was a clear and present danger to America and its allies. What it means, though, is that the President of the United States made a decision, based upon the various reasons that had been presented to him, that I do not think was best for the country. Have I lost faith in him? Certainly not! From my own mistakes, I know hindsight is much better than foresight. Furthermore, I cannot imagine anyone who could have done much better than Mr. Bush at a time so critical in our history. On the other hand, I can think of more than a few who I believe would have done much worse, including Al Gore, who seems to be clueless even about the events that happened and decisions that were made during the eight years of the Clinton administration—events and decisions of which he was supposed to have been a key player.

Add to these events one of the most divisive presidential campaigns in recent history, and you have a potent formula for the political trash and rhetorical garbage that has plagued the Bush administration's efforts to prosecute the War on Terror, especially the campaign to oust Saddam and its aftermath. What the Democratic hopefuls in this presidential campaign have done in their criticism of this administration's post-9/11 performance is absolutely shameful, and I think in some cases even treasonous. (The only exception was Senator Joe Lieberman, who although I disagree with many of his political positions, nevertheless, proved himself a true patriot by not politicizing the war.) Furthermore, the mainstream media has once again played the anti-war card it played during the Vietnam War. In the late 1960s, public opinion continued to support the Vietnam War, but unfortunately public opinion had ceased to count. In fact, as the *Tet* offensive of 1968 proved, even reality itself ceased to count, for all eventually came to agree that *Tet* was a crushing defeat for the North Vietnamese. Yet, all Walter Cronkite had to do from his anchor desk at CBS *Evening News* was to declare it a defeat for American forces, and a defeat it became. Likewise, all the mainstream media have had to do today is declare, without doing the painstaking research and intelligence gathering they have done in so many other investigations and exposes, that the al-Qaeda-Iraq connection was nothing but a fabrication concocted by the Bush administration in order to justify the President's long-standing vendetta against Saddam Hussein—a grudge that went back to Saddam's involvement in the thwarted 1993 assassination attempt against Bush Sr., who had led the Desert-Storm coalition that drove Saddam's forces out of Kuwait in 1991. Add to this the media attention given to trumped-up charges Michael Moore makes in his “Fahrenheit 9/11,” and many Americans now believe the President, along with his cabinet, totally fabricated the al-Qaeda-Iraq connection *and* the issue of WMD. Now just the other day, on October 7th, 2004, just twenty-six days before the Presidential Election, John Kerry brazenly proclaims that the Bush administration totally “fictionalized” the threat from Saddam Hussein (Stephen F. Hayes, “Remember October 7th,” *The Weekly Standard*, October 8, 2004). This matched what his wife had said a little earlier, when she said: “Iraq and terrorism had nothing to do with one another. Zero.”

Oh, really? Why then had Iraq been on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terror for more than a decade, most of which, not incidentally, was under President Bill Clinton? Why did the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee Report—a report panel member John Edwards approved—confirm this state sponsorship?

Then there was the October 27th, 2003 memo sent from Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith to Senators Pat Roberts and Jay Rockefeller, the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. According to Stephen F. Hayes, who referred to the classified memo in *The Weekly Standard*:

It was written in response to a request from the committee as a part of its investigation into prewar intelligence claims made by the administration. Intelligence reporting in the 16-page memo comes from a variety of domestic and foreign agencies, including the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. Much of the evidence is detailed, conclusive, and corroborated by multiple sources. Some of it is new information obtained in custodial interviews with high-level al Qaeda terrorists and Iraqi officials, and some of it more than a decade old. The picture that emerges is one of a history of collaboration between two of America's most determined and dangerous enemies. (“Case Closed: The U.S. government's secret memo detailing cooperation between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden,” *The Weekly Standard*, November 24, 2003).

He went on to say:

According to the memo—which lays out the intelligence in 50 numbered points—Iraq-al Qaeda contacts began in 1990 and continued through mid-March 2003, days before the Iraq War began. Most of the numbered passages contain straight, fact-based intelligence reporting, which in some cases includes an evaluation of the credibility of the source. The reporting is often followed by commentary and analysis.

Anyone interested in pursuing this further should get a copy of Hayes' article in *The Weekly Standard*, but suffice it to say that there is a preponderance of evidence that there was, in fact, an Osama bin Laden-Saddam Hussein connection *before, during* and *after* the Iraq War. (Incidentally, it was reported in the January 27th, 2004 issue of the Washington Post, that “Vice President Cheney...in an interview this month with the Rocky Mountain News, recommended as the 'best source of information' an article in *The Weekly Standard* magazine detailing a relationship between Hussein and al Qaeda based on leaked classified information.”)

Let's now turn our attention to WMD. When the Duelfer Report was released to the public on October 7th, 2004, “Gotcha, Mr. President” was the consensus headline in nearly every daily newspaper in America the next day. This report, prepared by Charles A. Duelfer, relays the findings of the Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. Sadly, the report confirmed what most of us had already come to expect after months and months of fruitless searching by a thousand-plus inspectors: there has not been found any stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq since the war began in March 2003. It also concluded that whatever illicit weapons Saddam Hussein did possess were most likely destroyed just after the 1991 Gulf War in accordance with U.N. sanctions. However, what failed to be reported by most of those same newspapers was the findings that the report highlighted in the first line of its Key Findings summary:

### **Key Findings**

*Saddam Husayn so dominated the Iraqi Regime that its strategic intent was his alone. He wanted to end sanctions while preserving the capability to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) when sanctions were lifted.*

- Saddam totally dominated the Regime's strategic decision making. He initiated most of the strategic thinking upon which decisions were made, whether in matters of war and peace (such as invading Kuwait), maintaining WMD as a national strategic goal, or on how Iraq was to position itself in the international community. Loyal dissent was discouraged and constructive variations to the implementation of his wishes on strategic issues were rare. Saddam was the Regime in a strategic sense and his intent became Iraq's strategic policy.
- Saddam's primary goal from 1991 to 2003 was to have UN sanctions lifted, while maintaining the security of the Regime. He sought to balance the need to cooperate with UN inspections—to gain support for lifting sanctions—with his intention to preserve Iraq's intellectual capital for WMD with a minimum of foreign intrusiveness and loss of face. Indeed, this remained the goal to the end of the Regime, as the starting of any WMD program, conspicuous or otherwise, risked undoing the progress achieved in eroding sanctions and jeopardizing a political end to the embargo and international monitoring.
- The introduction of the Oil-For-Food program (OFF) in late 1996 was a key turning point for the Regime. OFF rescued Baghdad's economy from a terminal decline created by sanctions. The Regime quickly came to see that OFF could be corrupted to acquire foreign exchange both to further undermine sanctions and to provide the means to enhance dual-use infrastructure and potential WMD-related development.
- By 2000-2001, Saddam had managed to mitigate many of the effects of sanctions and undermine their international support. Iraq was within striking distance of a de facto end to the sanctions regime, both in terms of oil exports and the trade embargo, by the end of 1999.

*Saddam wanted to recreate Iraq's WMD capability—which was essentially destroyed in 1991—after sanctions were removed and Iraq's economy stabilized, but probably with a different mix of capabilities to that which previously existed. Saddam aspired to develop a nuclear capability—in an incremental fashion, irrespective of international pressure and the resulting economic risks—but he intended to focus on ballistic missile and tactical chemical warfare (CW) capabilities.*

- Iran was the pre-eminent motivator of this policy. All senior level Iraqi officials considered Iran to be Iraq's principal enemy in the region. The wish to balance Israel and acquire status and influence in the Arab world were also considerations, but secondary.
- Iraq Survey Group (ISG) judges that events in the 1980s and early 1990s shaped Saddam's belief in the value of WMD. In Saddam's view, WMD helped to save the Regime multiple times. He believed that during the Iran-Iraq war chemical weapons had halted Iranian ground offensives and that ballistic missile attacks on Tehran had broken its political will. Similarly, during Desert Storm, Saddam believed WMD had deterred Coalition Forces from pressing their attack beyond the goal of freeing Kuwait. WMD had even played a role in crushing the Shi'a revolt in the south following the 1991 cease-fire.

- The former Regime had no formal written strategy or plan for the revival of WMD after sanctions. Neither was there an identifiable group of WMD policy makers or planners separate from Saddam. Instead, his lieutenants understood WMD revival was his goal from their long association with Saddam and his infrequent, but firm, verbal comments and directions to them.

Sort of paints a different picture of Saddam than many would have us to believe, doesn't it?

Truth is, Saddam sealed his own fate by supporting and exporting terror, and by failing to cooperate with the international inspections that were originally designed to force him to verify his disarmament—a role Senator Kerry and others seem not to have the slightest understanding of. The on-again/off-again inspection regime established by the U.N. Security Council in the wake of the Gulf War was never about a certain number of inspections, or even whether the U.N. inspectors could independently verify the status of Saddam's weapons programs. It was, instead, about verifying that Saddam Hussein actively engaged in disarmament and, in turn, his providing *positive evidence* of that disarmament. Given Saddam's proclivity for successfully hiding his illicit weapons activities in a country about the size of California, there could be no assurance he had disarmed unless and until he cooperated in fully documenting his disarmament. As Clinton's Defense Secretary, William Cohen, put it in November of 1998:

[Inspectors] have to find documents, computer discs, production points, ammunition areas in an area that size. Hussein has said, “We have no programs now.” We're saying, “Prove it.” He says he has destroyed all his nerve agent. [W]e're asking “where, when and how?”... The onus for this is firmly on Saddam Hussein.

Even former President Clinton has made it clear that “it is incontestable that on the day I left office [in January 2001], there were unaccounted for stocks of biological and chemical weapons [in Iraq].” And even Hans Blix, on January 27th, 2003, informed the U.N. Security Council that “...Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance—not even today—of the disarmament, which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace.” He went on, in that same report, to say that the “hide and seek” methods employed by the Iraqis forced the inspectors to try and map the weapons programs and to search for evidence through inspections, interviews, seminars, inquiries with suppliers and intelligence organizations. On February 14th, 2003, Blix told the Security Council that:

If Iraq had provided the necessary cooperation in 1991, the phase of disarmament—under resolution 687 (1991)—could have been short and a decade of sanctions could have been avoided. Today, three months after the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), the period of disarmament through inspection could still be short, if “immediate, active and unconditional cooperation” with UNMOVIC and the IAEA were to be forthcoming.

So, with Saddam Hussein purposefully failing to verify the dismantling of his WMD, how was anyone able to believe he didn't still have them? In fact, in April 2003, former Secretary Cohen flatly stated that:

I am convinced that [Saddam] has them. I saw evidence back in 1998 when he would see the inspectors being barred from gaining entry into a warehouse for three hours with trucks

rolling up and then moving those trucks out. I am absolutely convinced that there are weapons. We will find them.

In fact, it wasn't very long ago that John Kerry, John Edwards, and even French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin were talking about Iraq's WMD with much the same certitude as Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld.

So, prior to and during the Iraq War, there was every reason to believe that WMD remained stockpiled in Iraq, that it held large amounts of banned materials, and that it, in concert with other groups, sought to bypass WMD bans by attempting to develop effective ways to “weaponize” deadly nerve and biological agents, such as VX, anthrax, aflatoxin, and botulinum. These agents were known to have been produced (this is not speculation, in that Iraq itself admitted to producing them), and in significant amounts. It was the U.N. that discovered that Iraq had manufactured VX, a deadly nerve gas, and was developing a biological warfare program. And all of this predates the Bush administration's cataloging of banned and suspected WMD. In other words, contrary to what some are claiming today, these were not just “lies” trumped up by the Bush administration in order to tout war with Iraq. If so, then what did Clinton's former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, when ambassador to the U.N., mean when she said that Saddam's weapons program could “destroy all humanity”? We she “lying” too?

In the “anti-knowledge” framework that so many seem to be operating in today, will the media now pick up on the claim by one prominent professor of religion that there was never any compelling evidence that Saddam actually gassed the Kurdish people in northern Iraq? In fact, the horrific attack has been documented by mountains of evidence and confirmed by an army of human rights activists, diplomats, journalists, ad workers, and survivors.

For those who have not fallen victim to the “anti-knowledge” cartel, the combination of a repressive regime, WMD, and international terrorism, and the ability of this triad to disturb the peace of the world, and in view of the frightful blow our enemies delivered to us on 9/11, and with the realization that President Bush was and is obviously privy to classified intelligence information that was not, and probably still hasn't been, made known to the public, and with the pressure on him as the head of a state with the means to do something about it, I am comfortable in thinking that President Bush, in seeing to it that Saddam's regime was removed from power, operated in a reasonable and prudent fashion to a clear and present danger. May God bless him as he rules justly and righteously, is my prayer.

Was the Iraq War justified? Absolutely! Is the War on Terror that continues to be waged in Iraq and other places in the world just? Yes, as just as they come. Is it being conducted justly? Yes, it is—by our side, that is, not the terrorists. In fact, so far, it is the most justly fought war in history. This is a reflection of the fact that the U.S. Military, at this moment in time, organizes all of its training, strategy, and tactics with the just war theory of proportionality and discrimination in mind, and this means, above all else, doing one's utmost to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. Furthermore, and it's a shame that more people don't know that American soldiers are trained to refuse to obey illegal orders under the code of restraints called the “law of war”, which are rules derived in large part from the historic development of the just war tradition and its spin-offs as set forth in international conventions and arrangements. Consequently, the bitter debate that will continue about the Iraq war and its aftermath will continue to zero in on whether there was a justifiable reason for the Iraq War. It is my hope this chapter will help the

interested reader, who may not yet have his or her mind made up about the justification for the war, to finally make an informed decision.

With this said, one must keep in mind that war is not a perfect science. Mistakes are always made—some strategic, some moral—and the Iraq War and its aftermath is no different. But if the terrorist plague that now threatens the West is to be eradicated (or at least significantly diminished), then the jihadist swamps where such terror breeds will have to be drained. The war with Iraq was a means to that end. However, there are other swamps to be drained, and the task ahead will be daunting, even for the world’s only remaining superpower. But with God’s help, the long, arduous work ahead can be won, and what person in his right mind is there who would think that those of us in the West would be better off losing to the jihadists?

I would like to conclude with the words of Norman Podhoretz, who we cited earlier:

Now “our entire security as a nation”—including, to a greater extent than in 1947, our physical security—once more depends on whether we are ready and willing to accept and act upon the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history has yet again so squarely placed upon our shoulders. Are we ready? Are we willing? I think we are, but the jury is still out, and will not return a final verdict until well after the election of 2004.

May God bless us all as we try to think biblically and logically about this subject, and may God continue to bless America.