



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

Anti-Life Ethics in Iraq **by Jacob G. Hornberger**

As the debacle of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq continues to spiral downward, sucking countless more people into its death throes, some of those whose philosophy contributed to the fiasco remain steadfastly unrepentant for the death and destruction they have wrought.

Among the unrepentant is George Weigel, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, which describes itself as “Washington, D.C.’s premier institute dedicated to applying the Judeo-Christian moral tradition to critical issues of public policy.” The center’s website describes Weigel as “a Roman Catholic theologian and one of America’s leading commentators on issues of religion and public life.”

Weigel recently wrote an article entitled “Baghdad 2006=Tet 1968?” which was published in the December 7, 2006, issue of the *Arlington Catholic Herald*, the official newspaper for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.

In his article, Weigel writes, “Reasonable people could, and did, differ about the prudence of the March 2003 invasion. My considered judgment remains that the allied action satisfied the conditions of a just war.” In support of his conclusion, Weigel points out that “the allied coalition that invaded Iraq had multiple goals: to depose a murderous regime, thereby ridding the world of a serious threat to international security; to empower the people of Iraq through a democratic process; and to create a new political model for the Arab-Islamic world.”

Unfortunately, in his article Weigel failed to note an important point: to achieve those political goals, U.S. military forces had to kill Iraqi people — in fact, large numbers of Iraqi people — people whose government never attacked the United States. The estimates of the number of Iraqi dead range from a “low” of 30,000, provided by President Bush, to a high of 650,000, provided by researchers at Johns Hopkins University.

In arriving at his conclusion that the war on Iraq was warranted, Weigel is implicitly claiming that it is morally justifiable for U.S. soldiers, including Catholics, to kill Iraqi people (none of whom had anything to do with the 9/11 attacks) in order to achieve regime change in Iraq.

It would be difficult to find a more morally and ethically abominable and perverted view of human life than that. What Weigel is saying is that when measured against regime change in Iraq, the life of an Iraqi citizen — or the lives of thousands of Iraqis — is of only secondary importance.

One wonders whether there is even an upper limit to the number of Iraqi deaths that would cause Weigel to conclude that the Iraq War wasn't warranted after all — or whether his opinion on the war would be different if the number of American deaths matched the number of Iraqi deaths.

Weigel's position brings to mind the infamous response by former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, who was asked by *60 Minutes* whether the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children from the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq had been worth it. She responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price — we think the price is worth it."

Why shouldn't the issue of regime change have been left to the Iraqis, just as it was left to Eastern Europeans after U.S. officials delivered them into the clutches of the Soviet communists at the end of World War II? Under what moral or ethical authority does one nation impose involuntary regime change on another nation, especially when it will entail innocent people's deaths in the process?

As the reality of the continuing carnage in Iraq becomes more vivid in the minds and consciences of the American people, Americans would be wise to reflect not on whether regime change in Iraq has been "successful," but instead on the following two principles: (1) It is morally and ethically wrong to invade and occupy countries that have not attacked the United States; and (2) It is morally and ethically wrong for one nation to subordinate human life to the achievement of regime change in another nation.

Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

This article was originally published in December 2006.