

# CONFLICT/CONFLICTED

*Alexander R. Slate*

***I did not*** support the war in Iraq. I did not believe the justifications, the weapons of mass destruction, were real. Oh, I believe that the intel community gave the administration reports to that effect, but I believe that the intel community deluded itself. Actually, I believe that the analysts ignored any intel to the contrary and over-emphasized very spotty evidence that supported those conclusions because the word was out that Bush wanted to invade Iraq, and the analysis was going to support that idea come hell or high water.

I also believed that unseating Saddam was going to be a lot bloodier battle than it was, and I didn't believe that the gains would be worth the price. I am glad that I was wrong about how much resistance the Iraqi army would put up.

I was not wrong about the aftermath. I, like so many others outside of the Bush administration, foresaw the ongoing guerilla warfare that started immediately after Saddam's regime fell.

I also knew that the administration didn't have a clue about what the cost of this venture would be in terms of money or time. Frankly, I think we're going to be there as a significant presence for about another 10 years.

I also knew that the administration didn't have a clue in terms of the human cost (I'm speaking here in terms of stress as opposed to human life) on the military. I viewed going into Iraq before we had finished up in Afghanistan as a mistake.

Now how about Bush's retroactive (at least in part) justification that Saddam was a dictator and our purpose was to liberate the people in Iraq? Well, this sounds like a wonderful thing to do, and it probably is to a degree. But there are problems I have with this.

How can you justify this in Iraq, and not do this everywhere? There are lots of countries where this is true, and you don't see the Bush administration clamoring for this type of action in all sorts of other countries. This smacks of hypocrisy.

And exactly what is democracy and liberty anyway? How do you completely define it. Even the form of democracy in the United Kingdom is different than the form we have in the United States. Do we insist that the UK change their practices to match ours? A lot of this discussion seems to be over matters of degree. There are people here in the US that don't like our form of government, like the Freemen in the Montana area. Does that give someone the right to invade the US to liberate them from our 'tyranny'?

Yes, I agree with the basic statement from the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal and that there is an inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But I return to an earlier question, what is liberty? Also what is happiness? Different people are going to interpret these differently; and what gives me or you the right to impose our particular spins on anyone else?

Oh, there has to be a line drawn somewhere, but it needs to be drawn somewhere at a very basic level. Life is easiest, invading someone can be justified to prevent genocide. Had we attacked Iraq when they were killing off whole villages of Kurds, I could support that. But then why aren't we attacking Sudan to prevent the slaughter that is occurring down there (We probably should be.)?

But liberty is more difficult. There is a difference between slavery and not having the right to vote. Happiness is not an inalienable right, to be able to pursue happiness is and the two are not synonymous! Anyone, I have the right to pursue my happiness, and you have the right to

pursue yours. For me to pursue yours for you or you to pursue mine for me is presumption. I will protect you if someone threatens your life or basic liberty, and would hope that you would do the same. But I will not impose my will or your will on another otherwise.

Oh, yes, the more freedoms and rights the better. But you have to “fight” for yours and I have to “fight” for mine. Because I have to determine what is good for me, and you have to determine what is good for you. And if our goals are in conflict, well then we have to find some compromise. But that is between you and I and not anyone else’s issue.

Of course, someone is bound to bring up the recent elections in Iraq. Look at what the invasion has brought about that person will say. This never could have happened without the invasion, these people would never have had the right to these elections. Yes, the elections in Iraq are probably a very good thing, and it is good that the Iraqis are being allowed to have some say in their own destiny. And part of me says that to some small degree Bush might have been right. But then I look at the bigger picture. The elections still do not justify the invasion of Iraq! The ends only rarely justify the means, and they didn’t in this case.

Look, the Black Plague meant a tremendous decrease in population pressures in Europe, reducing the levels of starvation and overcrowding for long afterwards. Did that make the Black Plague a good thing?

*Illos by Jerry Collins and Alexis Gilliland*