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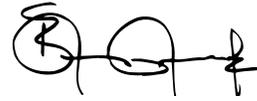
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INTRODUCTION

This, our fifth issue, is multi-topical in form. We had planned to include some information regarding the sexual abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) that appeared to late to be included in our last issue, but space limitations prevented this and it will appear in our next issue. You will find a mix of matters — serious and humorous. It is a mark of our times that the latter usually contain underlying traces of the former, but rarely the reverse.

We have formulated what we think to be a fair annual billing policy for all subscribers, many of whom have subscribed at different times and we explain this at the end of this letter.

Not too long ago summer was considered the season for “beach” reading and “light” films, but escapism is no longer possible when even “light” subjects can all too often bear troubling messages. “Light” or “heavy”, whatever the topic, we call attention to the failure of many of our institutions to fulfill their protective functions and responsibilities.



‘ASK YOUR DOCTOR’... BUT BILL THE TAXPAYER.

The general topic of health care in this country has proved to be far more difficult to resolve politically than originally contemplated. While other countries have created plans and structures that provide good care to all, our efforts have broken down into a continuing struggle for advantage between government, doctors, lawyers, hospitals, drug manufacturers, consumers and senior citizens’ interest organizations. In this seemingly endless tide of claim and counter claim humour has been in scarce supply, but can be found.

Here in Florida, the Medicaid program has been paying for four doses of Viagra a month, but has been forced to reduce that benefit to once a month because of budgetary limits.¹

As a result, will senior sex in FL be reduced by 75%? Will the argument over privacy concerns survive this forced government retreat from the bedroom? Will seniors find alternate forms of health expression to be paid for by government, or will they take to the streets for protest?

Far be it for us to begrudge a bit of bedroom bravado to our seniors, but it doesn’t quite seem to balance when they get the thrill and we get the bill. So much for finances.

As for the politics, you may recall that last year the Supreme Court affirmed the right to engage in consensual sex by two homosexuals in Texas, stating that the government had no place in the bedroom. The strength of the court’s reasoning might be somewhat weakened by the fact that as

the judiciary departs the bedroom the taxpayer enters. This has the ring of the old Abbott and Costello comedy films from MGM in which both stars frequently collided when entering and exiting the same space. But what seems to us most amazing is the degree to which our society, which used to consider sex as its most private form of behavior, is now so completely saturated by it that it has become funded by taxpayers through a government program.

A recent TV commercial for *Cialis* indicates that it is effective for 48 hours whereas *Viagra*’s efficiency lasts a mere 4 hours. We wonder whether the old boys are strong enough, and the taxpayers rich enough, to endure such dramatic product development.

“THE GRAIN THAT FEEDS HALF THE WORLD”²

We have noted that the National Science Foundation has funded a \$4.5 million research effort at Yale University to “create an inventory of expression patterns of every gene in rice.”³ It is hoped “that what’s learned in the rice analysis can be applied to other grain species and may lead to larger crop sizes . . .”⁴

On the surface this may seem to be a worthwhile development project which could provide greater crop yields and temporary relief in areas subject to chronic food shortages and the health problems or starvation that they induce.

The problem with a program such as this is that it is conceived outside the population/ environment equation and in the long run may have consequences the opposite of those intended.

Bearing in mind that rice “feeds almost half the world”, a successful result from this research might be seen as the creation of a new strain of rice that would significantly increase this crop’s global feeding ability. But “nature abhors a vacuum”, and, in the event of larger crops and reduced starvation and nutrition-related disease, population would increase and lead to greater long-term environmental problems. For instance, let us suppose that the new rice crop’s yield is increased by 25% and that, as more food becomes available, population surges by 20% to take advantage of it. But in the same time period water resources continue their pattern of depletion so that, while the food to population ratio is improved, the less flexible and more difficult water to population ratio has suffered.

“how delicately the population/environment equation is presently balanced.”

A very few people of the world’s billions, we suspect, realize how delicately the population/environment equation is presently balanced. We know that since the advent of the industrial revolution the impact of industrial processes and larger populations throughout the world have skewed the equation in ways that favor population and threaten the environment, and that these trends show signs of rapid acceleration over the past half century.

As a partial or total result, we now face such problems as global warming, weather pattern destabilization, aquifer depletion, loss of wetlands, ozone loss, acid rain, diminished maritime resources due to both overfishing and ocean temperature change, the destruction of rain forests, creeping desertification and a species loss the extent of which we are unable to measure.

We cannot determine the end point of this process. We do not know whether it will continue at its present rate or whether at some point, again unknown to us, its component forces will combine to produce a far more rapid growth, or even a sudden implosion - - - an environmental *gotterdammerung* with the ability to change life as we know it on this planet forever, or even to end it.

There are 200 million insects for every human being on earth and their biomass is about 29 times greater than ours.⁵ This is only one example of what a small niche we occupy in the total life of our planet. And yet, at any moment our policies may set off a chain reaction that could doom one or several of the interrelated strands of life and then, gathering momentum, spread its impact to enough other forms and food chains to cause widespread dislocation.

What we do know is that the forces that we have created and that threaten us are not ones that can be remedied by quick fix political solutions. It is the balance between our population and our environment that is absolutely critical. The NSF program, and others like it, may bring about good science and worthwhile research, but unless the latter is put to use and administered within the framework of the P/E equation, their long-term effects may be both unmanageable and unwelcome.

In this election year the issues are many, the personalities different and the stakes are high. As a result, any unanticipated event or reaction, here or elsewhere, no matter how seemingly minor (Sarajevo, 1914)⁶, can cause disproportionately serious consequences. Let’s look at a few areas which may produce some surprise issues:

IMMIGRATION — this could be a blockbuster, if for no other reason than that it has previously been withheld by agreement of both major parties from their presidential debates.

Earlier this year President Bush announced an amnesty/regularization plan to provide employment for illegal aliens in the US. It is arguable whether he thought he could actually pass the necessary legislation in this election year, as immigration has become one of our most emotional issues that reveals deep divisions between different sectors of society.

Immigration, both legal and illegal, is now running at an all time high which has caused many people to call for a meaningful reduction. But in an election year Mr. Bush may well have thought that by introducing his amnesty program he could enlist the support of the pro-immigration forces and make inroads into the Latino vote without actually passing enabling legislation.

Against this background, it is worth noting that in primary races in several western states this spring immigration was the defining issue. It might not make it to a presidential debate, but it’s undoubtedly best for the country if it is out in the open and can be seen as a debatable topic!

JOB OUTSOURCING — As more jobs, both blue and white collar, are sent overseas and command more publicity, it is clear that this issue strikes a sympathetic note with many in our society who sense that, while this practice may be legal, it falls somewhat short of our American standard of fairness. The expectation of fairness from government may sound soft and out of place in the hurly-burly and heat of bare-knuckle, election year politics, but it should not be dismissed. Many citizens from many levels of our society feel very strongly about it.

The growing evidence of outsourcing has thrown new, later and more intensive light on the two legislative pillars of globalism from which it received its initial impetus and encouragement — NAFTA and the WTO.

Our participation in both of these trade groups had strong sponsorship from Presidents Clinton and Bush, and, after an especially hard campaign which called in many markers, NAFTA was passed by one vote in the House. Also, in both cases each president pressed for, and received, fast track authority which prevents congress from modifying trade agreements made by the administration, but which instead forces it to vote “yes” or “no” on the full agreement.

What has struck us most forcefully about NAFTA and WTO is how the language of these agreements constrains the US, denies it access to reasonable redress in the case of conflict and favors other participants. The conditions imposed on us would not be tolerated in the normal course of business agreements between prudent private parties and raises the question of what was so important that normal safeguards were abandoned. We suspect the answer lies somewhere in the corporate thicket of financial and commercial

interests in which our trade policies are born and nurtured.

COMMANDER IN CHIEF — Under the current administration there has occurred a gradual transformation of how this title is used. Going back as far as FDR and Dwight Eisenhower, even in wartime, these leaders were generally referred to as President, with Commander in Chief serving as an adjunct title. Beginning with the hostilities in Iraq, President Bush is increasingly referred to only as Commander in Chief. This is especially noticeable in the ubiquitous election year TV commercials that emphasize his role in our mid-eastern military venture.

A more worrisome result of the Iraq war and specifically the Abu Ghraib abuse controversy, has been the revelation that the Justice Department issued advisory memos to the White House stating that the use of torture “may be justified” against Al-Qaeda prisoners held abroad, that our laws against torture might not apply to the war on terror and that the president may suspend international treaties prohibiting torture.⁷

We have entered into treaties such as the Geneva Convention for the protection of our own military personnel, and other countries are similarly motivated. For us, to engage in the use of torture will allow our enemies to rationalize their own use of barbaric methods, as we have already seen in Iraq.

Additionally, if our President has the right to waive treaty obligations, then other heads of state will claim the same authority. This is a process which, once initiated, we can no longer control and the court of world opinion will be unlikely to find that our torture is more acceptable than that of others.

EXECUTIVE EXPANSION — is evident in both parties’ claims of executive privilege and other forms of secrecy which attempt to deny access by public interest groups to information of real importance to the public. As examples, we point to Hillary Clinton’s refusal to reveal the names of her health care task force and G.W. Bush’s similar unwillingness to disclose the identities of his energy policy formulators.

Senator Clinton was eventually forced by court order to make public the names of her group and Pres. Bush’s response has worked its way through our legal layers to the Supreme Court which seemed to uphold the Bush/Cheney position while returning the case to the lower court. This suit was brought by Judicial Watch, a public interest group whose motto is “no one is above the law.”

Further along this line, last month Attorney General John Ashcroft appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee to answer questions about DOJ advisory memos and refused to give them to the Committee. In doing so, he neither invoked executive privilege nor any specific exemption under the constitution, but rather said he believed his denial was consistent with the historical separation of power between the three branches of government.

Ashcroft may simply be “playing out the clock” in an election year, hoping the matter will run its course and disappear (at best) or have to be resolved by lengthy legal action (at worst). There was mention of his being cited for contempt of congress, but this would require a committee decision which Republican Chairman Orrin Hatch is unlikely to support.

Truly responsible attorney generals are hard to come by because they are appointed to serve in political administrations, but they are also the nation’s leading lawyer and head of the Dept. of Justice in which capacity they are responsible for interpreting and administering justice for the public. This is a fine line to straddle and Ashcroft seems to be moving in the direction of presidential preference.

But there are further long term drawbacks to the DOJ’s view of policy by presidential preference. Surely, if a president can disown one part of a national treaty entered into by a previous administration and ratified by the Senate, then he can disown any other part(s) and the ability of a treaty to control behavior and produce results is lost. It would become a cynical device to buy time until true motives and actions could be revealed, as in the Hitler/Stalin non-aggression pact in August, 1939⁸ Looking ahead in this direction, we think that neither the interests of world peace nor the US would be served by a fluid approach to treaty adherence.

There is a common thread that runs through all of the items in this section (Election Year Notes), and that is the current tendency towards expanding the power and reach of the executive branch of our government.

Our government’s functional structure is based on three firm, but moveable, pillars which are joined by an elastic fabric that allows a certain degree of play between them and establishes a controlling dynamic balance. These pillars are, of course, our three branches — legislative, judicial and executive. As with all elastic materials, in their stretching action they create a counterforce which draws them back to the original form. For much of our history our government has been able to operate in an orderly way in accordance with the flexibility intended by its founders.

We have now entered into a period that seems to challenge this orderliness and test our elasticity by the growing assumption and concentration of power in the executive branch.

Consider these two very real possibilities of unilateral executive expansion. First, the ability of the President to suspend treaty terms as described above. And, secondly, the effort now in planning and preparation to grant Social Security benefits to Mexicans living in Mexico who had at one time resided and worked, either legally or illegally, in the US. It is believed by its backers in Washington that this program, with all its potential for fraud, abuse and lack of controls, can be put in place by the Social Security Administration without congressional debate or enabling legislation.

If these two events are seen as opposite ends of a spectrum of executive encroachment — from a massive misapplication of domestic financial resources to the disavowal of foreign treaties — one can only imagine the degree to which other less prominent areas of government operation are being influenced.

No single factor is responsible for this move towards executive dominance. Certainly political correctness plays a part, as it does at all levels and departments of government, in that it stifles debate, penalizes strong opposition and lures the unwary or the overly ambitious politician into an addictive embrace from which he is most unlikely to escape. Faust lives!

Another element that has increasingly favored the growth of executive branch power has been the rise of the cult of

personality in our society and our politics. This has coincided with the explosive media emergence in the past century. The two are so closely joined that, entwined like strands of DNA, they may be considered one.

“... and the President lived in Washington, not in our living rooms.”

A hundred years ago presidential candidates spoke in downtown city auditoriums, from small town band stands or the backs of their campaign trains in rural areas. Depending upon a multitude of human and natural factors, reports of what was said generally appeared in newspapers at varying times the next day. Presidential coverage competed with every other item in the paper, local and national, and then, with the next day's paper, passed into history. There were no public press conferences with extended questions and answers and the President lived in Washington, not in our living rooms.

With the advent of broadcast journalism, first radio and then TV, this all changed and both the office and the person of the president had to become more accessible. After all, the oval office is the top. For the press it is where both the buck and the trail stop. And nothing could come more surely or naturally in twentieth century America than the promotion and glorification of its political pinnacle.

No announcement, of course, of this change was ever made. We were swept up in it and expected to play our part in a process fueled by a continuing convergence of the power of money, politics and entertainment.

These are a few of the forces at work this election year. Vigilance is recommended. Watch for them; they will appear soon at a voting booth near you.

philosophic merit, but it seems to ignore a host of political, social and cultural realities.

The first is that our rapid development over a mere four centuries from wilderness to colony to independence to super power was due in no small measure to chance. It is true that our founding fathers were educated men of high principle and spirit who were able to create and pass on an unusual form of government and the sense of purpose necessary to sustain it.

But they were blessed with a vast continent with its fabulous wealth, climate and space that favored success. We enjoyed access and protection from both our east and west coasts and were removed from the frequent conflicts and quarrels of continental Europe. We were, to the extent that the times permitted, free from interference to become what we wished to be.

However, now that we find ourselves the world's sole superpower in a completely different time and place, is it realistic to think that, for whatever reason, we can or should plant our flag, faith and form of government where we wish in other parts of the world that have not had the good fortune to either share our experience or to be blessed with the critical circumstances of our origin?

The Bush administration has offered a variety of reasons for our war in Iraq, some or all of which may provide some support for its move, but none of which has generated the overwhelming, unarguable basis that we, as a people, have the right to expect. More and more often administration figures refer to our role in Iraq as “our cause”, but the several reasons cited at different times for our undertaking this war weaken this label. Arguments do not always become causes and rarely do so without a strong moral quality.

Some voices among those who represent our government and those who comment on it have expressed surprise at the level of resistance we have encountered. Recalling, perhaps, the liberation of Paris in WWII with cheering crowds and flowers, they felt our forces in Iraq would similarly be seen and received as liberators. But today bears no resemblance to 1944 no matter how much “spin” is applied. Have those who do not see the difference been “reading their own press clippings?”

“What would we do?”

Another simple, but key, question that comes to mind is “what would we do?” Let's suppose that we are not a superpower, but a country of only medium size, strength or importance, and we were to come under the occupation of a larger power with a different culture in the course of which we are told that our economic, religious and political systems must be changed. Facing the demand for such a cultural makeover, would we be more likely to acquiesce or to resist? We would most certainly devise ways to launch an effective opposition and, further, use the same hit and run, guerilla tactics which the Iraqis are presently using and which proved so effective against Hitler in WWII in occupied France, Scandinavia and the Balkans.

That's the quick and simple answer to “what would we do?” The truth is that once we frame that question the issue is joined in a different way. We must consider that the roles of both occupier and occupied relate to our own lives in many

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ISLAM - BACKGROUND

We have resisted commenting on our involvement in Iraq up to this time because we hoped that events there might take a positive turn with benefits for both Iraqis and ourselves. As casualties on both sides mount, as our policy is weakened by lack of results and respect and as violence continues to be the dominant response to our military/political presence there, we can no longer avoid attempting an objective evaluation of our current circumstances.

From the beginning, as the argument for a military move into Iraq grew louder and more frequent, we had the haunting suspicion that both the concept and competence of the Bush administration in this matter were, at best, suspect and, more probably, deeply flawed. By “competence” we do not refer to the actions of our combat forces, but rather to the ability of our upper levels of government to create a climate of acceptance of a dominant, unilateralist US role in the Near-East.

It may be that our now-stated goal of installing a pluralistic, democratic government based on free market economic policies (read capitalism) in Iraq might have some intrinsic

ways and that their differences must be understood if we are to achieve a resolution.

Last month, following the death of President Reagan, the nation's TV screens showed three days of mourning and grief. Without exception the crowds and participants at the funeral procession, the memorial service and the lying in state were measured, quiet, reverent and dignified.

By contrast, similar events in Islamic countries reveal highly agitated mourners that indulge in self-flagellation, arm and fist pumping, weapons firing and repetitive yelling of political or religious mantras.

These two entirely opposite images are symbolic of the vast difference between the Islamic nations of the Near East and the Christian West; and the task of bringing them together, or greatly reducing the gap between them, challenges our view of Islam and how we deal with it.

There are, however, in reality two Islams that share the same name but vary greatly in their beliefs and behavior. Most of Islam is capable of co-existing in peace and moderation with Christianity and interprets its holy scriptures in the Koran as supporting such accommodation. A smaller group of Islamic extremists sees coexistence as a threat, rejects it entirely and is willing to use extreme violence to put forth Islam as the only true faith and means of access to the divine will.

One curious aspect of the Christian/Jewish/Islamic tragedy of violence that has played out in the Near East for centuries is that these three desert religions have common origins, and yet their points in common are completely overwhelmed by hatred and distrust.

“In many ways Islam is a faith of both conviction and contradiction.”

It is the Islamic extremists who do the most harm to the cause of peace in the Near East and in other Muslim dominant areas; and it is their acts and organizations that we will be most concerned with. However, having said that, the line that separates them from mainstream Islam is not always easy to draw, as they often use force or threats to take over moderate Islamic groups or mosques, and then convert them to their own purposes. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the royal family lays claim to a moderate form of Islam, but powerful extremist groups control the educational system and in other ways constrain the ruling family. In many ways Islam is a faith of both conviction and contradiction.

To understand the difference between the two burial images, we must start with the fact that in the Islamic world religion and politics are not separate pursuits. They are joined by thought and deed, and there is even a code of Islamic law (sharia) derived from the Koran which deals with both civil and criminal matters and prescribes harsh penalties such as hand amputation for theft and stoning to death for adultery.

This violent wedding of faith and politics in extreme Islam is a misuse of both and we believe that it is rooted in a deep and abiding anger that, in delivering its message of hate, has poisoned mainstream Islam.

In approaching the subject of Iraq there are two basic realities that we must consider. The first is that America is a predominantly Christian country that labors under a curious contradiction. While today we loudly proclaim the separation of church and state, in the early days of our colonial settlement religion was an equal, if not dominant, force in community life, and many public offices were held by either ordained or lay church officials.

The religious freedom and tolerance sought by many of the early colonists was an effort to escape the violence and abuse of the religious conflict in 17th century England. Once removed, however, from the royal prerogative to specify the form and content of religious worship, the colonists established a society that in its first century drew much of its strength from religious life and leaders. In this atmosphere, social and political status was rarely conferred upon those who strayed from the shadow of the church steeple into other more secular areas of life and thought.

Iraq today is a determined Islamic state with ties between church and state far stronger than any that ever existed here. The gulf between Christian America and Islamic Iraq is so vast and constant that our efforts to appear as a liberator were, in all likelihood, doomed to failure.

It's true that Saddam Hussein was a vicious tyrant whose removal would advance the cause of human rights in Iraq and benefit many of its citizens. But it's also true, and the basis for a more permanent political calculation, that any attempt to impose political change by an external agency (and especially a Christian one) would be taken as a cultural offense and a political threat. It is amazing that those who conceived and planned our level of engagement and its hoped for results felt that they could maneuver in or around this major obstacle.

The second reality has to do with the key word “impose”. Our form of government is a mixed bag — many faults and many benefits. On balance, we see individual freedom as the greater good and our value system has elevated it so that it dominates most other considerations.

This is not true in Iraq and for us to make a determination in Washington that it is, and will be honored, seems highly unrealistic. So much so, that even the thought of imposing political (and from the Iraqi perspective also religious) regime change should have set off all kinds of warning lights.

Whether our philosophy of freedom and our adherence to democratic principles will spread throughout the world and replace the many belief systems that now exist is very much an open question. Peaceful revolutions have a way of breaking down into wars, and even the most ambitious efforts at global domination (most recently, world communism) have difficulty translating their message at the local level into a form and language acceptable to populations of very different beliefs and backgrounds.

Because of this we believe that any imposed regime change accompanied by political conversion to a new form of government is unlikely to succeed. Rather it must originate within the home country and attract outside assistance only by request.

This brings to notice one of the most glaring institutional failures of the UN. It has a charter of beliefs to which its

members supposedly subscribe. And yet, it has no mechanism for dealing with member regimes, such as Saddam Hussein's, that openly disregard the charter's membership requirements.

Moreover, any constituencies, at home or in the form of exile groups abroad, that press for the charter's declared human rights are denied legitimacy and held at bay. At the least, the UN could begin a process of allowing and encouraging applications for a membership change where reasonable evidence of repression exists. The sitting government's delegation could be suspended until a determination is made as to whether it is in violation of the charter. Such a procedure might be administered through the Credentials Committee, but, in light of its sensitive security considerations, a small newly formed group dedicated to upholding the charter and operating in strict confidence would work better. Difficult, yes? But not impossible, and preferable to the present hypocrisy.

Most westerners, probably and correctly, see Islam as a rigid and controlling religion. It favors religious education, limited rights for women, arranged marriage, multiple daily prayer periods, extended fasting, severe dress codes, and an attitude towards sexuality that is as suppressive as ours is excessive. It forbids the depiction of the human form in its art, and through the sharia specifies violent forms of physical punishment for civil and religious offenses.

The problem with the kind of repressive control practiced by Islam is that it produces two directly opposite effects within its followers which have so far not been controllable by the religious leadership.

The type of strong control of behavior and thought practiced from an early age in Islamic religious and educational classes can be easily accepted and converted to an image of strength and protection by some. Or its restrictive capability can rub others absolutely raw with anger and frustration that accumulates over time and is transformed into a life dominated by resentment and hate.

We Americans take for granted the freedom of inquiry, exploration and experiment that has so strongly marked our culture and development over the past three centuries. The unusual, almost unique, circumstance of our birth enabled us to simultaneously engage in the physical exploration of our continent and the intellectual inquiry and political experiment necessary for the creation of a new and different form of government. The power of these tools and the moment when we put them to use cannot be overestimated.

Sadly, Islam has never experienced such a moment and, most probably, never will. To achieve mutual understanding we will have to take each other on faith, a great deal of faith, and we question whether either culture can summon enough to reach across the divide.

Bear in mind the circumstances of the present Islamic generation that we are attempting to transform. It inhabits a mostly baked, bleak and arid landscape. Its recent history is one of vast extremes of wealth and poverty. The present young generation mostly lacks political connection and its future seems as bleak as its surroundings.

Perhaps the human mind could overcome these forces and provide a measure of societal salvation, but Islamic schools lack the tools to foster independent creative thought and inquiry. The mental space within the classroom is often as

bleak as the landscape outside.

This is the ultimate deprivation — the closing down of the mind — and can produce, long after it occurs, a very intense and enduring anger. Take one look at young boys committing Koranic passages to memory in Muslim madrasahs; then follow this with inflammatory political rhetoric after their teen years. The result is a capsule image of the birth of terrorism in our time.

In the nineteenth century we undertook, largely by force and deceit, over a long period of time and through many tribal wars to remove the Native Americans from their land and culture and to replace the latter with our own. In the course of this effort, and as information became available afterwards, the image of "the great white father in Washington" suffered an enormous loss of credibility. To the extent that we attempt to offer the same image and transformation to Islamic states, we are likely to suffer the same result.

The extremist Islamic clergy has done its job well. The seed of anger has been deeply planted at a young age. It will germinate for a decade or two and then let loose its mounting anger and sense of injustice. And it is precisely this perception of injustice which makes the problem so difficult. For in the alienated Muslim view, anything that relieves injustice becomes justice, and any action, method or tactic employed is not only permissible, but honorable and necessary.

The authority cited for all Islam's rules and regulations is, of course, the Koran, and it is its interpretation that provides Islam with the degree of flexibility that has enabled it to survive and grow into the modern era. This process of interpretation is conducted by Islamic scholars and clerics many of whom are deeply divided as to the Koran's meanings. Some can argue persuasively that a Koranic text can have opposite, dual or multiple meanings.

This capability to interpret divine will creates great power within the hands of an elevated priestly class that enjoys a life style and circumstance superior to its younger, poorer followers who march and protest in the public squares and often die in urban alleys. This gap between priest and public is not unique to Islam, but has been present in most recorded religions.

History shows that forcing different cultures into a confined space results in prolonged conflict with anger, violence and pain for all. This has proved true in Iraq and in the larger Near East with such regularity that we should not be surprised when our incursion is viewed by Iraqis as a form of cultural and political disfigurement.

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THE IRE IN IRAQ

Anger is one of the central facts of life in Islamic Iraq. It is most plainly seen in Islamic extremists' attitude towards the West, but is also a domestic constant in the relations between Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. Take your pick; there's more than enough to go around. Our comments in this section are again largely concerned with the Islamic extremists, but we must bear in mind their ability to move the moderate mainstream.

Anger can be released spontaneously at the surface or it can be held back and built up over time, continually reinforcing itself by growing resentment. Again, there's plenty

of both kinds to be found in Iraq.

Whatever the original causes for extreme Islam's social and political anger may be, it is being fueled today by two major forces — economic globalism and advancing technology — which replay for Islam its history of failed opportunity to progress economically and politically as other cultures have done.

The cumulative effect of many such failures is very painful, for with each lost opportunity the cycle and sense of despair and injustice is reinforced and displayed in full view both at home and abroad. Extreme Islam has become a broad movement that taps into these deep feelings of anger and despair; and it makes use of them in attracting to its cause those who lack effective economic and political representation and the benefits derived from them.

Perhaps the key reason that Islam finds itself falling behind other societies is that it is a repressive religion with strict laws that it has used to separate itself from those of other beliefs. This, over time, has led to isolation which, in turn, produces more anger and resentment and permits the cycle to continue.

Extreme Islam's repressive nature can be seen in its fundamentalist control of sex, costume, alcohol and other behavioral elements. More importantly, it is opposed to representative government, objective intellectual inquiry, an independent press, rights for women, secular education and many of the other freedoms that western thought and development have encouraged.

It operates clandestinely within the shifting religious and political boundaries of our time, claiming divine scriptural approval of its use of indiscriminate violence and killing.

It has developed, and can show sufficient patience to put to its own use, the laws of the country it has targeted for attack, as for example, the generous immigration laws in Europe and the US.

In Europe the growth of Muslim populations bent on political and social agitation has led to increasingly virulent anti-Semitism not seen there since the pre-WWII era when Jews were targeted by both fascists and communists.

In the US the Muslim population is surging, but, unlike prior immigrant groups who came to create a new destiny for themselves out of our freedom and openness, extremist Muslims arrive with a full kit of hate and envy. Moreover, through modern communications technology, they are able to stay in constant and unobserved contact with their home culture, providing the ideal makings of a revolutionary political cell. They are well-funded and trained in employing their funds to make charitable and political contributions that will further their cause.

Our present dedication to political correctness silences all but the most determined voices of warning and they, of course, are far outnumbered, as there can be no mention of other cultures than our own unless it is laudatory and inclusive.

We view true Islam as one of the three great desert religions which shares some common origins and spirit with Judaism and Christianity. We see it as intelligent, deliberate and striving for understanding, but we also see it as being contaminated by extremism and, as yet, unable or unwilling, or both, to clean its wound by exposing and breaking with its usurpers. Such a paralysis works entirely to the advantage

of the latter.

“Today, in America ... the presence of extreme Islam is both larger than we think and increasing.”

Today, in America, we have no way of knowing or estimating what percent of our Islamic population is extreme and what part benign. Perhaps our Department of Homeland Security is beginning to get a grip on these numbers. We hope so. But one thing is almost assured and that is that the presence of extreme Islam is both larger than we think and increasing. These two factors pose a real and continuing threat to our national security.

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History has taught us any superiority obtained through weaponry technology is temporary. The long bow, gunpowder, the battleship, the airplane, rockets and nuclear bombs all have provided a momentary advantage and then were made equal by shared possession. Always present to assure that weapons technology does not remain proprietary are those merchants engaged in its purchase and sale.

We, and the world, are embarked upon a new century which will pose new and difficult challenges for all. There is a “new colonialism” and a “new imperialism” (more about these in a later issue) now at work which, while differing in some respects, bear strong similarities to their predecessors.

We have no special knowledge about matters in Iraq, but we suppose that there are career employees in the State or other departments of government who do. Nevertheless, it seems that our decision to intervene militarily in that country failed to consider some very evident points of both near and long term importance. The result is that our cost in lives, money and reputation has been greatly increased to the disadvantage of the American people and to the way we are viewed by the rest of the world.

There are inherent costs in the use of unilateral force. We think ours in Iraq are far higher than they should have been because recognizable warning signs were disregarded. Had they been objectively evaluated and identified, there is a very real possibility that a different course of action might have emerged and been taken.

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AS OTHERS SEE US

Political administrations are called upon to serve a variety of physical and philosophical constituencies. Invariably these interests seek money, legislation, political advantage or other forms of leverage. In domestic politics, where administrations and congressional representation can change frequently, policy mistakes can be remedied by passing or amending the original act or by issuance of corrective executive orders. While sometimes cumbersome, the domestic mechanisms are in place and in our hands.

This is not true of foreign policy. Our actions abroad have

far reaching consequences for other populations and, once taken, are not easily called back for a redo. In our conduct of foreign policy we often describe our actions somewhat vaguely as “serving or protecting our national interest” which often includes some of the same commercial, agricultural, military and personal interests that sway domestic considerations.

Foreign policy does not provide the same flexibility as domestic issues do. It requires a surer hand, a defter touch and the ability to form and exercise it based more on vision than opportunity. A good question to ask in our relations with other countries and their peoples is again “What would we do if we were in their place?” The answer could provide a perspective somewhat different than Washington’s and might also reveal what kind of response our policy might bring forth.

In a world of instant communications, easily concealable weapons and terrorists intent on mass mayhem it would seem almost a matter of conscience to attempt to develop policies based on local intelligence and interests as well as our own. Good foreign policy does not lend itself to quick photo ops and sound bytes, but it can save time and lives and money. Unfortunately, as a sole superpower it seems more difficult, but not impossible, for us to create.

Our second closing note in Iraq has to do with our practice of paying informers enormous sums to aid us in capturing former members of the Baathist regime. You may recall that one Iraqi informer received \$30 million for information as to where Saddam’s two sons could be found.

Acting upon the information he provided, we conducted a raid in which both sons were killed, thereby preventing our obtaining any useful intelligence from them. The informer was paid and provided with a new identify, background, passport, etc.

The US government has fifteen intelligence gathering sources in its military and civilian branches which receive annual funding close to a hundred billion dollars. It seems somewhat demeaning that we have to go outside our own intelligence structure and spend taxpayer money to provide an elegant life style for a former Saddam associate. The average middle class taxpayer who struggles to make ends meet might well think this \$30 million payment was excessive and even unnecessary. The best that can be said about it is that it captured a brief PR moment. But it leaves a bad taste and not much room for pride except for the informer who can now enjoy a luxurious life here or elsewhere. Paris, London or Switzerland, perhaps? Was he able to negotiate personal protection as well? Nothing surprises anymore!

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“JUSTICE FOR ALL”

There are two other aspects of our venture in Iraq that we view as flawed. The first is our repeated assertion, when our troops or villains are attacked by insurgents, that we will bring the attackers to “justice”. Usually this turns out not to be possible, but it has become a kind of political mantra that we recite to affirm the rightness of our cause.

After we are attacked we retaliate and, in doing so, more insurgents and Iraqi civilians are killed, whereupon the insurgents take their case to Al-Jazeera and claim that “justice” will be done. It is clear that both sides are using “justice” when “revenge” might be the more appropriate word.

Eventually the cycle of revenge plays out over a prolonged period with each new incident taking the glare of publicity while the earlier ones fade into the background and out of memory except for the families of those lost in the violence. In this way the cycle, itself, becomes dominant. It loses track of and overwhelms the lives that it lays to waste. Who can recall the moment of the first random attack in Iraq? In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? In IRA-Protestant battle in Ireland?

The world watches these attacks, that impartially target both non-combatants and the military, as they increase in frequency and strength. The cycle, fuelling itself, picks up momentum which in turn brings forth even more determined claims to justice. The concept of justice has had many different meanings in different times and places of human history. In twenty-first century Iraq in the midst of an Islamic/religious — Western/secular cultural and political war it is more likely to inflame than to bring about agreement.

And it might be a stop on the road to realism to remember that there are many people and governments who recognize our superpower role but not the rightness of its application in Iraq.

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IRAQ - CONCLUSION

Our initial effort was the result of too many answers and not enough questions which has brought us to the point where the reverse is true. Perhaps some of the questions that persist will provide a learning experience that can be useful in future considerations. We hope so.

There are many contradictions involved in our planting our flag, faith and form of government in alien soil. The first is that our democracy is represented as a government of popular choice, but the act of uninvited military intervention in another country brings about an initial restriction of choice as the population of the occupied country is denied various activities and forms of expression which the occupier deems unsuitable.

We cite freedom of religion as a basic element of our belief system, and this is also prominently reflected in the UN charter. But it is highly doubtful that, after turning back sovereignty to the Iraqis, we would permit any significant return there to the teachings of extreme Islam. On a practical level, we have a clear, but unstated, idea of how much Islamic opposition we will tolerate, and anything beyond that level will result in our re-exercising our ability to take control.

This is not unlike Henry Ford’s response to a comment about the Model T which he had produced in great quantity, but all in the color black. When told that many car buyers would prefer a choice of color, he said, “They can have any color they want, as long as it’s black.” This is certainly not a ringing manifesto for consumer preference, but it held sway until, of course, it became clear to Mr. Ford that it was in *his* interest to add other colors to his production line.

The difficulty with democracy is that it promises something to everybody. Free speech, for instance, can lead to so

many voices that none can be heard clearly; nor can government effectively provide all that is demanded by the many separate voices of a free and equal population.

We have been able in the US to make democracy work as well as it does by building institutions which channel, control and moderate the demands upon our government. They are also intended to protect the individual citizen and represent him in his relationship with government, although there is considerable evidence that this institutional function is suffering neglect in many areas.

Without the institutions we built, and the freedom we enjoyed as a small, young, growing and cohesive society, our democracy might well have failed or been usurped and converted to a different purpose. We are, and have been, very fortunate.

But Iraq? In a country deeply divided by centuries of tribal and religious conflict to establish instant institutions (and loyalty to them) that can break with its former history and traditions is a daunting challenge which unilateral intervention may well be unable to resolve.

“... *“red meat” for the global marketers . . .*”

In our claims for Iraq’s future we identified a democratic, pluralistic form of government dedicated to free market principles. We suspect that the latter entails embracing economic globalism and the intense international marketing drive that has sponsored its spread throughout the world. Could Iraq, and perhaps other countries, be “red meat” for the global marketers who provide an endless supply of films, TV, music and catalogs that elevate sex, violence and money to culturally acceptable standards?

If so, we should be prepared for wrenching confrontations and resistance from cultures unlike ours with a further loss of our moral status among other nations. This runs counter to Washington’s image of our providing (and presiding over) a benevolent, peaceful and even-handed spread of democracy throughout the world.

The idea of specifying an economic system (“free market principles”) in our political package for Iraq represents a tremendous departure and change from an Islamic economy that prohibits something as basic to our system as charging interest.

Until the 15th century land was the most common form of wealth throughout the world. With the age of exploration in Europe trade was able to transform itself from a local to a global form of commerce and, by the goods that it provided, established a new, land-free means of wealth accumulation.

With the advent of the industrial revolution in the 19th century, the production process became the prime source of wealth which, due to its ability to seed and grow other products/services, it remains today. In the West the movement of wealth away from a purely agrarian base brought forth an aggressively competitive form of economic ownership labeled “capitalism” which has proved to be enormously efficient in producing growth (and, its by-product, wealth).

Russia, because of its vastness and isolation, held to the agrarian mechanism somewhat longer than the west until 1917 when the Romanov monarchy was terminated and a

communist system of government, and economics, was installed. Since then the two major political forces in the world have been combined with specific economic systems (democracy/capitalism and communism/statism) and joined in an intense global struggle over markets, methods and minds.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its announcement of economic reform, the democracy/capitalism forces picked up considerable momentum and many of the chips on the global table. Playing a strong hand, they were able to expand into smaller, less developed countries without opposition, thereby initiating the process of economic globalism. In short order local institutions were transformed in order to more readily receive the promised benefits of increased revenues to be afforded by new trade and technology.

But here is the key point. Iraqi government and society lack the kind of institutions that can provide critical strength and protection in the course of broad political and economic (and, therefore, societal) transformation. In a country like Iraq, riven by religious, tribal and political opposition, it is quite possible that the buffeting of the various active elements caused by transformational shock could weaken them enough to compromise the new structure.

Charley Bartlett points out in his always interesting newsletter, *Coleman/Bartlett’s Washington Focus*⁹, that Rep. Tom DeLay (R-TX) sees it as our national duty “to export democracy and freedom to every corner of the globe”. Whether such duty includes unilateral military intervention was not specified.

But we have seen how closely religion and politics are bound together in Iraq. We also have included in our Iraqi kit economic reforms along the lines of free-market, capitalist models. What we are attempting in Iraq has yet to be proved either as a success or failure, although so far most people here and in Europe see it as unwieldy.

In the end, only time and the Iraqis can pass meaningful judgment on our actions. Whom will they primarily benefit? Can they bring forth the type of institutions needed for strength and stability? Can they bring about internal peace? Are they able to be viewed as even-handed and fair by Iraqis and as not being a form of US control over and intrusion into Iraq’s destiny?

If the Iraqi people and government are able to provide positive answers to these questions, they will manage to come away with far clearer insight and better results than we were able to articulate in our original concept.

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No matter how successful or unsuccessful Iraq may be in determining a viable future and government for its people, America has suffered grievous losses. Almost a thousand young American lives have been lost in pursuit of a “cause” which is not supported by a large sector (and perhaps even a majority) of the nation’s citizens. Our cost in dollars in behalf of this “cause” is over \$100 billion and climbing with no point of cessation in sight. And we have lost an incalculable amount of respect, face and goodwill around the world from nations, including our historical allies, of differing sizes and cultures.

Like the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale in colonial Salem (MA)¹⁰, we have bared our soul in pain and public. Some Americans will see our effort in Iraq as a benign application of super-power democracy. Others will see arrogant imperialism, cruelty, hypocrisy and a blind pursuit of ideology. It is almost assured that, whatever the end, we will remain deeply divided over the means of achieval.

It appears now that the elections in November will yield some measurement of the numbers on each side of this issue. If so they will hopefully quell the national argument and inform our future actions, but they cannot call back for us what has been lost.

Finally, it may come to pass that a mass conversion to democracy as we see it will take place and the world will experience a Pax Americana. But we doubt this and question the US's ability to provide the necessary leadership.

In Afghanistan the Taliban have returned and are killing those who register to vote. In Iraq the civilian death toll is in the thousands. Bear in mind that most of those killed by the insurgents had no political ties to the US or to the new provisional government. Some may have obtained jobs as translators or in the new army or police force, but by far the majority were people "who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time".

Political conversions, whether peaceful or violent, are chancy things that have a way of not sticking to their original scripts. Much of what determines how, when, or even if they take place plays out at the local level. To have even a chance of being successful, there must be a nexus of political, economic and religious cooperation on which to take action, invite assistance and base a reasonable expectation of future administrative success. Even so, a long life cannot be guaranteed, as the many compromises that are necessary to obtain agreement can make space for and invite controversy that will weaken the new government. This kind of weakness may not appear quickly, but may lie dormant for months or years, until it is re-ignited by the old hatreds and fears, and explodes. The final results of our policy in Iraq will not be known for some time during which, whether we are present or not, we will be held, to a large degree, morally and politically responsible for them.

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BILLING POLICY

We have been struggling with establishing a billing policy that will be both simple and fair. The problem lies mainly in the fact that people have subscribed at different times. Ideally that would require sending out multiple billing notices keyed to each subscription's anniversary. Too complicated and time consuming.

Our solution will be to bill everyone, either separately in September or with the mailing of our fall issue, for a year in advance. Recent subscribers will not be billed again, but, if you are billed by error, please inform us. By adapting this system we believe everyone will have received from three to six issues without charge. Those who don't respond to this billing will be removed from our mailing list.

This is our version of sawing legs off a table. It's tricky and

a nuisance, but for the present serves a purpose. We thank you for your support and hope you will continue as a subscriber in the year ahead.

EDITOR'S BIO

Mr. Ault has a background in marketing of consumer products and financial services. He is a graduate of Yale University, a special limited partner of the Venture Capital Fund of America, NYC, NY of which he was a co-founder, and the author of *A Retail Food Study* (La Roche & Co. NYC, NY 1957) which described the emergence and growing dominance of the supermarket in American food retailing.

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END NOTES

1. Palm Beach Post May 10, 2004 Editorial Page
2. Yale Alumni Magazine - March/April 2004 p 27.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Parade 6/6/04 p. 19
6. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria which is generally credited with initiating the alignment and actions of nations involved in WWI.
7. The Associated Press via Palm Beach Post 6/11/04
8. Protected by this treaty, Hitler invaded Poland on Sept 1 and commenced general hostilities that engaged the major European powers. Less than two years later, on June 22 1941, Nazi forces launched a broad attack on the Soviet Union.
9. 2208 46th Street NW, Washington DC 20007. Issue of Wednesday, June 16, 2004
10. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne; Ticknor, Reed and Fields, Boston MA 1850