



[WAR]

## IRAQ: THE GOOD NEWS

TAC has been accused overlooking the good news in Iraq and focusing on the negative, but some benefits have definitely flowed from the invasion. Take the case of David H. Brooks, CEO of Long Island-based DHB Industries, which makes bulletproof vests for the military. His is one of the war's most glittering success stories.

In 2001, Brooks earned the nice but hardly kingly sum of \$525,000. But with the invasion of Iraq, Pentagon contracts poured in and his company thrived. The vests DHB produced were not perfect (but what is?), and 5,000 of them were recalled for failure to meet specifications. But that didn't thwart Mr. Brooks. Last year, he was able to sell company stock worth \$186 million, and has reportedly made over \$250 million since the war began.

Nor has Brooks been the sort to sit back and clip coupons; he has gone out to share the wealth. Last month Brooks gave a bat mitzvah party for his daughter Elizabeth that will surely go down in history. He brought in Tom Petty, Aerosmith, Don Henley, Stevie Nicks, and Kenny G for the parents; for the kids, rappers Ciara and 50 Cent. Brooks himself wore a black leather, metal-studded suit, then changed into a hot-pink suede version of the same outfit. The coming of age party cost an estimated \$10 million.

We hear so much bad news about Iraq, but critics have to admit that if we hadn't invaded, this party would not have been possible. For perfectly embodying the values of the Bush presidency, David H. Brooks should be in line soon for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

[CULTURE]

## BLAME THE BIBLE BELT

James Kurth makes a novel and important point in the fledgling foreign policy journal *The American Interest*. He pre-

dicts that evangelical Christians will be allotted a disproportionate and unjust share of the blame for the train wreck that is George W. Bush's foreign policy. Kurth records that evangelicals supported the Bush democratization project "because it was a *Bush* project and they were already committed to his policy (or more accurately his rhetoric) on cultural and social issues." Previously, evangelical Protestants had not made foreign policy a priority and were indifferent to the democratization projects proposed by the Clinton administration. Evangelicals would welcome the expansion of democracy for the missionary opportunities it opens but "think such opening will come about through God's work and not through their own political actions." Evangelicals who take the Bible seriously know that Christ is the light of the world and that to see America in this light is a form of idolatry.

Evangelicals were recruited to join the Bush war coalition; they didn't apply pressure to go to war. Nonetheless, Kurth maintains, they are likely to emerge as the principal scapegoats. Liberals and secular conservatives will readily agree that evangelicals are to blame, while "the real architects of Bush foreign policy will be forgotten, if not forgiven, because they do not threaten

Democrats and liberals on ... cultural and social issues." Evangelicals do threaten liberal cultural hegemony, however, and "the opportunity to marginalize them by blaming them for a foreign policy debacle will be irresistible." Time will tell whether Kurth is right, but the odds, sad to say, are in his favor.

[SPIN]

## RUMMY'S THESAURUS

Over Thanksgiving, Donald Rumsfeld had—his word—an "epiphany." No, he hasn't realized that guys named Curveball make lousy informants or that "stuff happens" isn't the best way to justify an occupation gone bad. He's discovered that "This is a group of people who don't merit the word 'insurgency.'" Reason being, they "don't have a legitimate gripe." (Admitting that his distinction might be lost on standard usage, the SecDef promised to look it up. Our *Merriam-Webster* defines insurgent as "a person who rises in revolt against civil authority or an established government." No requirement that the authority consider the rebels' grievance reasonable.)

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace, who followed Rumsfeld at the press conference, slipped up and used the "i" word twice—"I can't think of a better word right now." Rumsfeld

recommended the lyrical “enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government.” Bush waxed even more poetic, designating the opposition “rejectionists.”

But it’s not about word games. Playing with the thesaurus doesn’t lessen the zeal of the resistance, and refusing to understand the nature of their fury because we prefer a softer label will only raise the cost of our folly.

[POLITICS]

### CLOSING RANKS

When it comes to getting his way on Capitol Hill, Bush has long enjoyed a secret weapon—Democrats willing to break ranks and support him for good (tax cuts) or ill (Iraq). In the House alone, 41 Democrats represent districts Bush carried in 2004, while only 18 Republicans hail from districts won by John Kerry.

The increasing unity of the House Democrats is another sign of the president’s devalued political capital. In a recent budget vote where 11 moderate Republicans bucked their leadership, not a single Democrat defected. Democrats are slowly groping toward a consensus against the Bush foreign policy. Their leaders are telling members in swing districts to sit tight, gains are coming in 2006.

For most of Bush’s presidency, the opposition has recalled Will Rogers’s famous quip: “I’m not a member of any organized political party. I’m a Democrat.” But finally, at least as far as House Democrats are concerned, Bush is a uniter and not a divider.

[JUSTICE]

### CHIPPING AWAY?

As we go to press, the Roberts-led Supreme Court is wading into the abortion debate in *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood*. At issue is New Hampshire’s parental-notification law, which allows pregnant teenagers to obtain abortions, if their lives are in danger, without telling mom and dad but does not con-

tain the kind of health exception that has allowed similar statutes to survive high court challenges.

It’s unclear where John Roberts wants to take the court on abortion, and the outcome of this case may signal whether he is willing to accept the *status quo*, reconsider *Roe v. Wade*, or more likely, slowly expand the perimeter of acceptable abortion restrictions. So far, Roberts has offered few clues. Some legal analysts have speculated the court might read a health exception into the law; others have suggested it might end or curtail Sandra Day O’Connor’s “undue burden” test, which has overturned many a state abortion regulation.

Samuel Alito is waiting in the wings. Democratic senators have pilloried him for a 1985 memo in which he endorsed slowly chipping away at *Roe* as opposed to a full frontal assault. During the confirmation hearings, they will try to determine whether this remains Alito’s strategy. *Ayotte* may reveal whether it is the Roberts Court’s—or if conservatives have been fooled again.

[MEDIA]

### MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Despite what rejectionists say here at home, brave Iraqis are making progress fighting terrorists and building democratic institutions. Terrorism is unknown in 17 of the country’s 18 provinces. Chapters of the Iraqi-Israeli Friendship Society have blossomed from Baghdad to Basra. Women are free to pursue any career and dress any way they please. Never has a country been more unified. That’s why we call it “Iraq the model.”

Well, don’t blame us for trying. We read the *Los Angeles Times* headline “U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press” and thought we could use a few dinars ourselves. We eagerly await our Christmas present from the Lincoln Group, the PR firm handling the Pentagon’s account. ■

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# Dershowitz v. Desch

In our Dec. 5 issue, *The American Conservative* published a review of Norman Finkelstein's *Beyond Chutzpah* by contributing editor Michael Desch. Alan Dershowitz, whose scholarship was critiqued by Finkelstein's book, objected at length, attacking both the author and our reviewer. His complaint, along with Desch's reply, follows.

## Dershowitz writes:

When a far right-wing magazine embraces an avowed communist, the topic under consideration must be Jews and Israel. It is not surprising, then, that *The American Conservative* has found a kindred spirit in Norman Finkelstein. Both have declared war against "American Jewish elites," and both spout wild conspiracy theories about Jewish influence on America's media, culture, government, and economy.

I am referring to Michael Desch's purported review of Finkelstein's book, *Beyond Chutzpah*. It is only a "purported" review because as the headline suggests ("The Chutzpah of Alan Dershowitz") the majority of the article is devoted to attacking me. Desch makes four accusations against me, all of which are not only false, but so sloppy and implausible that it would have taken only a few minutes of fact-checking to refute them.

(1) Desch parrots Finkelstein's claim that I have turned my back on a career as a civil libertarian by "present[ing] a brief for torture." Had he read my book, *Why Terrorism Works*, instead of relying on Finkelstein's mischaracterization of my position, Desch would know that I am a stalwart opponent of torture, that I have fought hard against torture in both America and Israel, and that my proposals are designed to minimize and hopefully prevent torture.

As I have written: "I am against tor-

ture as a normative matter, and I would like to see its use minimized. I believe that at least moderate forms of non-lethal torture are in fact being used by the United States and some of its allies today. I think that if we ever confronted an actual case of imminent mass terrorism that could be prevented by the infliction of torture, we would use torture (even lethal torture) and the public would favor its use...

"I pose the issue as follows. If torture is, in fact, being used and/or would, in fact, be used in an actual ticking bomb terrorist case, would it be normatively better or worse to have such torture regulated by some kind of warrant, with accountability, recordkeeping, standards and limitations? This is an important debate, and a different one from the old, abstract Benthamite debate over whether torture can ever be justified. It is not so much about the substantive issue of torture as it is about accountability, visibility, and candor in a democracy that is confronting a choice of evils."

(2) Desch accuses me of a "partial reading or misreading" of Benny Morris, whom I cite several times in *The Case for Israel*. Desch concludes that "Finkelstein documents these charges in exhaustive detail in Appendix II of his book and the preponderance of evidence he provides is conclusive."

Finkelstein's "evidence" consists of empty conclusory statements. Finkelstein writes that I "significantly [misrepresent] what Morris writes in *Righteous Victims*." These are easily falsifiable charges. All one has to do is to ask Morris himself what he thinks of my characterization of his scholarship and findings. Martin Solomon, a professor at Florida Atlantic University, wrote to Morris, asking him what are "his feelings concerning the manner in which Alan Dershowitz uses citations from 'Right-

eous Victims' in his 'The Case for Israel'" and whether Morris "still hold[s] the views that Dershowitz attributes to [him]...." Morris replied that Dershowitz was "right about [his] views," even adding that one could "read [Morris's books] and arrive at the same conclusions, bypassing Dershowitz."

(3) Desch writes that Finkelstein proves that I violated "the spirit, if not the exact letter" of Harvard's plagiarism prohibition. Finkelstein first claimed that I did not write *The Case for Israel*. As he had with other Jewish writers, Finkelstein suggested that the Mossad or AIPAC had written my book for me. When I revealed the handwritten manuscript—I do not type or use a computer—Finkelstein changed his story to plagiarism. Finkelstein's accusation boils down to a claim that I "lifted" quotations from Joan Peters. Yet I cite Peters eight times, as anyone perusing my book can easily see. I even stated that "I do not in any way rely on her demographic conclusions or demographic data."

I immediately asked Harvard to investigate Finkelstein's phony charge, and Harvard conducted an independent investigation by former president Derek Bok. Finkelstein acknowledges that "former Harvard president Derek Bok, 'a scholar of unquestioned integrity,' had looked into the charges against Dershowitz and 'found that no plagiarism had occurred.' The matter was 'closed.'" In addition to being fully exonerated by Harvard University, I have been cleared by James Freedman, former president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the *New York Times*, and numerous professors and librarians.

Desch relies on Finkelstein's accusation that I "direct [my] research assistant to go to certain pages and notes in Peters's book and place them in [my] footnotes directly." As Finkelstein