

**IRAQ, THE “SURGE,” AND JUST-WAR THEORY:
SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN
LIGHT OF CATHOLIC MORALITY**

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This piece was originally presented as a talk for the Archdiocese of Detroit’s Presbyteral Council’s “Disputed Questions” Debate, on February 19, 2008. It argues that the most recent phase of the Iraqi war effort—the “surge”—meets the just-war criteria. In the next issue of CSSR (2009) the editor would like to include a short “symposium” that would include responses to this article, and a reply from the author. Anyone who wishes to respond may submit, for review, a response of approximately 1000 words or less, by January 10, 2009. Send a Word file to Lowery@udallas.edu The numbering will make it easy for respondents to refer to the article. Keep in mind that this piece was written in March 2008.

1.

The following remarks are directed primarily at the morality of our country’s present military actions in Iraq, that is, the “surge.” I have argued in a previous article that our March 2003 invasion of Iraq (and the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan) met the traditional criteria for a just-war.¹ I will not directly revisit those arguments. After the initial invasion, however, when in particular it became clear that the intelligence was faulty and there were no weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—although almost *everyone* said that there were!²—I too had, I must admit, like many Americans who supported the war, some misgivings and second thoughts about the rightness of toppling Saddam Hussein’s totalitarian Iraqi regime. This second guessing was then fueled by the way the Bush administration, on then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s watch, had poorly conducted the postwar effort after the defeat of Saddam, for example, in its failure to contain and crush the terrorist insurgency and provide basic security and services for the populace.

Nonetheless, this second guessing did not last long. Despite the troubling developments mentioned above, which included growing sectarian violence and the involvement of Al Qaeda in Iraq (among other terrorists), I continued to believe (and do so today five years later) that our justification for going to war—which included reasons other than WMD—was fundamentally morally sound.³ Let us remember that these

reasons included—in the context of our post-9/11 world—Saddam’s ongoing violation of the U.N resolutions from the 1991 Gulf War and the evil nature of his regime with its brutal violation of human rights. This is not to say, let me add, that my view was not unsettled by the fact that Pope John Paul II and the U.S. Bishops, among other religious authorities, were opposed to the war, all the while pleading for a peaceful solution; significantly however, as far as I am aware (and this factored into my initial view), the Holy Father never explicitly *condemned* the war, for example, saying that it did not meet just-war criteria.⁴

2.

No matter how one thinks about the morality of our country’s decision to go to war in the first place, however, the crucial question before us now is, as it is often framed in the media: *Do we withdraw our troops now or very soon, or do we continue the surge, with a gradual drawing down when conditions on the ground permit?* There are many other complex questions surrounding our involvement in Iraq. Clearly, we cannot undo the past even if we wanted to. What lies before us presently is our responsibility to a country that we invaded, rightly or wrongly. To cut-and-run would, in my view, have disastrous consequences for our country, for Iraq, and for the world in the years to come. I will spell out some of these consequences as well as articulate as best I can other reasons for staying in Iraq with a heavy military presence at least for the time-being. Yet I realize that this is a difficult and controversial issue, full of emotion on both sides. Nonetheless, I hope to provide some much needed moral clarity to enlighten our consciences.

3.

First, a comment on the new strategy of the surge, led by General David Petraeus and Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, which was announced by President George Bush in January 2007 and took full effect in June 2007.⁵ To the surprise of many, as I write, it is working. Military expert Max Boot writes in the February 4, 2008 edition of *The Weekly Standard* that the surge—the counterinsurgency plan to send tens of thousands of additional troops to “clear, hold, and build”—has succeeded: “Iraqi and American deaths fell by approximately 80 percent between December 2006 and December 2007, and life is returning to a semblance of normality in much of Baghdad.”⁶

Columnist Fred Barnes seconds this opinion: “[T]he surge has been a success. Violence is down, Baghdad mostly pacified, many Sunni leaders have abandoned their insurgency, and Al Qaeda in Iraq has been crushed (though not eliminated).”⁷

Boot notes, however, that this is a fragile success: “Now the danger is that public opinion may be turning too optimistic. While Iraq has made near-miraculous progress in the past year, daunting challenges remain, and victory is by no means assured.”⁸ Barnes too warns that the war is not over yet, “nor have the Iraqi government’s steps toward sectarian reconciliation between Shia and Sunnis amounted to much.”⁹ Moreover, as Boot reports, the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki “has done a terrible job [especially in Sunni areas] of delivering basic services: water, electricity, garbage collection, sewers, education, and all the rest.”¹⁰

Now let me turn to the substantive reasons why—not unrelated to the surge—I think that we need to remain in Iraq, not setting a timetable for troop withdrawal before our mission is completed.

4.

First, I want to address the subject of what we owe as a matter of justice to the Iraqi people. “To the extent that the government of Iraq functions at the local level,” Boot reports, “at least in the regions we [Boot and his team] visited, it is due to American battalions, who are arranging everything from the supply of fresh water to the installation of street lights.”¹¹ As an invading army that is still occupying the country, we have a moral obligation to ensure that we finish the job that we started—not “cut-and-run.” This job includes not only defeating the insurgents and restoring peace and security, but helping to put the democratically-elected government of Iraq on a stable footing while also providing basic services to Iraqi citizens. To abandon the Iraqis now, including the great numbers of refugees, at a time when they are in greatest need of our support—including economic, political, and military support—would be, in my view, the greatest betrayal imaginable.

5.

Whatever the many and shifting reasons given by our government to invade Iraq both before after the invasion—e.g. find and destroy WMD, enforce international law, regime change, protect human rights, the wider war on terror, the spread of democracy/nation-building,

etc.—we must not forget that we now as before (must) wage this war for the purpose of securing an authentic peace.¹² The so-called “peace” that existed in Iraq before Saddam’s overthrow was what St. Augustine would call a “shadow peace,”¹³ a false peace, not the *tranquillitas ordinis* that Catholic social theologian George Weigel translates as “the peace of a just public order.” “The proportionate and discriminate use of armed force,” writes Weigel, “must aim at the construction of the peace of order, which is composed of security, justice, and freedom.”¹⁴

Some contemporary just-war theorists (e.g., the secular political philosopher Michael Walzer¹⁵), as Weigel notes, conceive postwar peacemaking as a separate cluster of just-war criteria, what they refer to as *ius post bellum* (= the justice after war). Others, like just-war theorist James Turner Johnson of Rutgers University and Weigel himself, argue that this third element, in addition to the *ius ad bellum* (= the justice of going to war) and the *ius in bello* (= justice in fighting the war), is really already an intrinsic component of the *ius ad bellum* criterion of “right intention.”¹⁶ It is, in other words, a “specification of a legitimate public authority’s duty to do what is good, which in the case of war does not end with repelling evil but includes the duty to build the peace...”¹⁷ This is the *ius ad pacem*, as Weigel calls it. Whatever position we take on this scholarly and historical issue, Weigel affirms that “the duty to build a secure peace in the aftermath of war is intuitively grasped by morally serious people.”¹⁸

6.

What would happen if we left Iraq immediately as some suggest we do? This question is absolutely essential. In a sobering March 22, 2007 editorial, the editors of *The Wall Street Journal* laid out four serious (and probable) consequences, beyond almost certain chaos in Iraq, of an early withdrawal of U.S. troops. These are as true today as they were eleven months ago. First, they argued that the U.S. would lose credibility in containing weapons proliferation, especially in Iran. Second, they pointed out the danger of broader Mideast instability—both among our allies (e.g. Turkey) and our enemies (e.g. Iran, Syria). Third, they warned of a loss of credibility with Muslim reformers, if, after an early exit, they would have watched us betray the millions of Iraqis who have risked life and limb to vote. Fourth, they believed that we would invite more terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, since “bin Laden would be more emboldened to strike the U.S. homeland with the goal of driving the U.S. entirely out of the Mideast.” They therefore concluded that if we pull out of Iraq too soon, “The poison of radical Islam will

spread far and wide across borders if it can make even a plausible claim to being on the ascent, and nothing would show that more than the retreat of America from Iraq.”¹⁹ I believe that this last point has ample historical precedents of recent vintage to back it up. I would add a fifth consequence: The influence of Iran would unfortunately grow, as even now it asserts itself militarily and politically, especially inside Iraq’s Shiite majority power structure.²⁰

7.

In a brief but salient June 2007 *Newsweek/Washington Post* online article, the former editor of *America* magazine, Thomas J. Reese, S.J., asks, what do we owe the Iraqi people and what are we capable of delivering?²¹ These questions, it seems to me, are the right ones to ask, and I have already asked the first one. Fr. Reese, after summarizing the views of one who supports our staying (Gerard F. Powers) and one who opposes it (Msgr. Robert W. McElroy), gives his own view: “Once again [as with Vietnam], I am scared by talk of a bloodbath, but I see no evidence that the U.S. military can force the Shiites and the Sunnis to get along. Ultimately, they will have to work it out on their own as they have for centuries. While Powers is correct that the U.S. has a moral responsibility to the Iraqi people, I do not think that this obligation can be effectively fulfilled by the U.S. military. I think it is time to set a date certain for withdrawal. But who am I to make this decision? Rather let’s allow the Iraqi people to vote in a referendum on whether they want the U.S. to stay or not. They are better positioned to know whether we are helping them or hurting them.”

I disagree, of course, with Reese’s counsel to set a definite timetable for leaving Iraq. And I do not know how he would assess the more than year-long surge that is in progress—one that has actually seen many Sunnis and Shias come on board with our efforts to stabilize Iraq. But let me briefly engage the two authors that Reese notes as taking pro and con positions on our continued presence in Iraq, namely Gerard Powers and Msgr. Robert McElroy—whose articles appear, respectively, in the March and April 2007 issues of *America* magazine.

8.

In “Why We Must Withdraw from Iraq,” McElroy argues that continuing the war fails at least four of the just-war criteria: just cause, right intention, last resort, and reasonable hope of success. Imposing a democracy on a country was never considered a “just cause” for war in

the Catholic just-war theory, he writes. Nor, he says, is preserving the reputation of the U.S. fulfilling the criteria of right intention. Nor have all diplomatic and other nonmilitary means been exhausted. Nor, he argues, has the U.S. defined achievable success in any concrete way. McElroy complains that the war's supporters say that those who support withdrawal must prove that withdrawal will not destabilize Iraq. "In Catholic thinking, the calculus is just the opposite," he writes. "Those advocating continued military action in Iraq face the burden of proof not only to demonstrate that remaining in Iraq is clearly more likely to yield more good than evil, but also to show that such continued action meets the conditions imposed by just-war thinking."²²

In my view, the very real success of the surge so far shows that remaining in Iraq is, to use the words of McElroy, "clearly more likely to yield more good than evil" (always a difficult calculation!) and that it has been conducted according to "the conditions imposed by just-war thinking." Never before, for example, has an invading army done more to insure during the surge (and before it) that innocent civilians were not (directly) harmed or killed; rather there has been a concerted effort (in an about-face change of policy) to win the "hearts and minds" of average Iraqis.²³ This is not to say that innocents have not been killed—either directly or indirectly—but that this has not been the policy of the U.S. armed forces; in fact, they have intentionally tried, with great effort and risk, to prevent this from happening. There is, moreover, ten months after McElroy wrote, not only "a reasonable hope of success," there is the very real *past and present success* that the surge has already achieved, as noted earlier in my remarks (see #3 above).

In terms of "imposing a democracy" on the Iraqis, it is, in fact, the Iraqis themselves in overwhelming numbers who support the effort to establish a democracy in their country and many others among them who welcome our presence there (at least in the short term until they can stand on their own two feet with minimal support from us).²⁴ In a fascinating January 28, 2008 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, Max Boot and former Marine Bing West write, "A staggered Al Qaeda is steadily losing one redoubt after another because, in the most important shift in the war, the Sunni people turned against the terrorists and aligned with the American soldiers. Over 80,000 men (mainly Sunnis) have joined neighborhood watch groups that the U.S. calls Concerned Local Citizens [CLC]. Essential in last year's battles to drive Al Qaeda out of Baghdad, the CLCs also provide Sunnis with a defense against Shiite militias." (And some of the latter fight each other!). "Now," they continue, "victory is within our grasp—if only the Iraqi government could effectively reach out to Sunnis and Shiites alike who are fed up with violence and sectarian divisions."²⁵

The existence of the CLC's is a promising development—one that you probably had not heard of if you were only following the mainstream media which usually focuses its attention on the (now decreasing) daily violence and suicide bombings (and even with these stories, its reporting is sometimes grossly inaccurate or false²⁶). Although there are, in fact, plenty of negative stories to report, to ignore the great good that is being done by the U.S. and Coalition forces can lead to a certain fatalism about the futility of our efforts at a time when real progress on many fronts is truly possible.

I do agree with McElroy, however, that diplomacy (and non-military means) is needed if by that term we mean the effort to reconcile, for example, Sunnis and Shias or to urge other countries to assist in the reconstruction and development of Iraq. I do not agree with him if by diplomacy we mean, for example, opening talks with the mullahs in Iran whose interest is in a destabilized Iraq. Indeed, I see it as highly problematic. Finally, McElroy is surely right that the U.S. has not always clearly defined what it means by “achievable success.” This, I believe, was truer in the past than it is presently with the surge, where military objectives have been more adequately set forth, at least as far as I can determine, although I am not an expert in military affairs.²⁷

9.

In opposition to McElroy, Gerard Powers, of the University of Notre Dame argues in “The Dilemma of Iraq,” that the U.S. “has imposed itself on Iraq. It cannot, in good conscience, withdraw until it has exhausted the long-term process of helping Iraqis through a period of what the U.S. bishops [and the Vatican] call ‘a responsible transition’” (For the U.S. Bishops’ position, see below #11). This will require, he says, rebuilding the infrastructure destroyed in the war and helping establish a security force capable of maintaining order. Powers acknowledges that “An ethic of obligation must incorporate a hard-headed calculus of the efficacy of occupation.” But he says, “The futility of U.S. efforts must be very clear, however, in order to override the heavy obligations the nation owes the Iraqi people.” Powers concludes: “The U.S. presence is no doubt contributing to the insurgency, but it would be worse if the United States embarks, as it might be doing, on a slow, quiet version of ‘cut and run.’ This could leave Iraq a festering, failed state that is a source of regional instability and global terrorism.”²⁸

After more than one year of the new counterinsurgency strategy, it is clear, however, that our presence in Iraq is *not* contributing to the insurgency, in my judgment. In fact, as many have noted, it is

helping to bring many Sunnis around to the idea that our committed presence there is reason enough to throw in the towel, turn their backs on Al Qaeda, and help our efforts (see also my comments above under #8). Nor is it evident that we are embarking “on a slow, quiet version of ‘cut and run.’” With the surge firmly in place, it seems that—at least for the foreseeable near term (i.e. the remainder of the Bush presidency)—we have committed ourselves to achieving victory in Iraq, a victory that includes not only the defeat of the terrorists but the establishment of a democratic Iraq, however fragile and imperfect by our Western standards it might be. Political reconciliation, argue proponents of the surge, can only come about once security is established, not the other way around.²⁹ If Sen. John McCain is elected president, we can look for an even stronger commitment to the surge and its objectives, I am sure.

10.

In large measure, I think the decision to go to battle involved, as it should, a prudential application of just-war principles on the part of our government.³⁰ Whether it was a “war of choice” or a “war of necessity,” is a good question, but one that recedes further into the distance as we confront our long-term obligations in Iraq and the Mideast. Reasonable Catholics could have, and did, take different positions on the war’s morality, for example, whether it satisfied the criteria for a just-war. The same is true of the surge and our continued presence in Iraq. I do not believe that there is any one “Catholic” view on this change in strategy. Like the decision to invade Iraq in the first place, Catholics have taken different positions on the morality of continued action. Because the surge involves so many prudential or situational factors, there is indeed room for these different positions.³¹ As long as the surge, in general, is being conducted according to just-war principles—as I believe it is—which includes no direct killing of non-combatants, proportionality, and the exclusion of torture,³² I support it, while at the same time taking into account that unfortunately there will be (and have been) occasional abuses committed on our side in war (and surely on the part of the terrorists!), especially in a “war on terror.”

11.

I believe that I have some measure of support from the U.S. Catholic Bishops to argue this way. For example, in their November 2007 statement on the Iraq war, the Bishops note how, in the current situation, the traditional principle of “noncombatant immunity” or

discrimination is crucial, as is the principle of “probability of success.” Regarding the latter, the Bishops write: “Each course of action in Iraq should be weighed in light of the traditional moral principle of ‘probability of success.’ In other words, will the action contribute to a ‘responsible transition’ and withdrawal *as soon as appropriate and possible*? This principle requires our nation’s leaders to be more realistic about the difficult situation in Iraq and more concerned about the likely consequences of a withdrawal *that is too rapid or not rapid enough*.”³³

The Bishops call for our nation’s leaders to focus on the “carefully limited goal of fostering a ‘responsible transition’ and withdrawal at the earliest opportunity *consistent with that goal*.”³⁴ Continuing, the Bishops insist that “The moral demands of this path begin with addressing the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and minimizing further loss of human life.”³⁵ Thus, the Bishops argue that our nation must focus on the “ethics of exit” rather than on the “ethics of intervention.” One can take the Bishops words to heart, however, and still support the surge; for one thing, nothing in their statement rules it out as intrinsically wrong. And for another, even an “ethics of exit,” as the Bishops conceive it, needs to focus not merely on how to “get out as fast as we can,” but on how to exit in such a way that what we leave behind (i.e., Iraq), finds itself in a situation that at a minimum it can live with (i.e., better off, not worse than we found it at the time of the invasion).³⁶

12.

Much more could obviously be said on this subject. But let me conclude by giving George Weigel the last word: “We may be sure,” he says, “that the war against terror will suffer commensurably if the Iraqi phase of the quest for freedom and a new politics in the Arab Islamic world is frustrated. No one—in the Congress, in the churches, in the academy, or on the street—can wish for that and still claim the mantle of moral seriousness.”³⁷ We all have a duty to familiarize ourselves and others with the resources of our great Catholic moral tradition on the just war. Ignorance of it can only lead to the lack of moral seriousness that Weigel dreads. And that, I am afraid, would have dire consequences for our human future.

One more thing, no less important: Let us keep praying for our soldiers, their families, and the people of Iraq. This is a story that is not going away anytime soon, however much we would like it to. So we will continue to read of its daily developments, its many ups and downs. May it have a peaceful outcome!³⁸

Notes

The author would like to thank Richard Myers, William E. May, and Tom Leonard for reading various earlier drafts of this paper. The final version of this paper was written on March 8, 2008.

1. See my “Just War Theory, Catholic Morality, and the Response to International Terrorism,” *The Catholic Faith* Vo. 8, No. 3 (May/June 2002): 33-36, 38-40, 42-44, which argues that after 9/11 the invasion of the Taliban’s Afghanistan was just. In an updated and revised version, available online at: <http://www.archdioceseofdetroit.org/AODonline-sqlimages/SHMS/Faculty/LatkovicMark/CatholicSocialTeaching/JustWarTheoryandTerrorism.pdf>, I argue that the invasion of Iraq was just. For additional links and articles on the just-war theory, including ones related to the conflict in Iraq written up to the 2007, see the indispensable website available at: http://www.ratzingerfanclub.com/justwar/#additional_wot.

2. There are some who have called into question this finding of no WMD. Others have credibly called into question the view that denies a relationship between Iraq and Al-Qaeda. See e.g. Stephen F. Hayes, *The Connection: How al Qaeda’s Collaboration with Saddam Hussein Has Endangered America* (HarperCollins, 2004).

3. For general background on the war, see the respected military historian John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). See also James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein: Just War and the New Face of Conflict* (Roman & Littlefield, 2005).

4. See e.g. Sandro Magister, “War in the Gulf. What the Pope Really Said,” available online at: <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/6928?eng=y>. This article originally appeared in *Chiesa*, March 20, 2003. It examines texts of the pope (reprinted in the article) devoted to Iraq from January 1 to March 19, 2003.

5. See e.g. Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, “The Patton of Counterinsurgency,” *The Weekly Standard* (March 10, 2008), pp. 27-33. This article is also available online at: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/822vfpsz.asp>. Frederick W. Kagan, one of the architects of the surge, has published many insightful articles on the war in Iraq. These are available online at: http://www.aei.org/scholars/filter.all,scholarID.99,type.1/pub_list.asp. Kimberly

Kagan's reports and analysis of the Iraq war are available at the Institute for the Study of War's website www.understandingwar.org.

6. Max Boot, "We Are Winning. Why We Haven't Won," *The Weekly Standard* (February 4, 2008), pp. 28-36, at 28. This article is also available online at: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/642xndxj.asp>. See also Wesley Morgan, "Iraq Reborn," *National Review* (February 11, 2008), pp. 37-40. This article is also available online at: <http://nrd.nationalreview.com/article/?q=ZDE5MGUwNmU0ZmE5NDJINGJkZjc0NjcxYWIxNTFkNDU=>

7. Fred Barnes, "How Bush Decided on the Surge," *The Weekly Standard* (February 4, 2008), pp. 20-27, at 21. This article is also available online at: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/658dwgrn.asp>. In a February 11, 2008 editorial titled, "Benchmarked," the editors of *National Review* provide further evidence of the surge's success so far: "According to military officials, 75 percent of Baghdad's neighborhoods are secure. Around the country, civilian deaths are down 75 percent, while attacks on American troops are down 60 percent since June [2007]. Al Qaeda has been roused from its strongholds in much of the country, and is having trouble mounting its trademark spectacular attacks" (*National Review*, p. 14). See also Richard Lowery, "'Re-Liberators': A Progress Report from Iraq," *National Review* (March 10, 2008), pp. 32-40. This article is also available online at: <http://nrd.nationalreview.com/article/?q=ODdmMmExYTIyNDQyOTQ2ZDRIMzYzMzhmYjkyZTdkN2E>.

8. Boot, "We Are Winning. Why We Haven't Won," p. 28.

9. Barnes, "How Bush Decided on the Surge," p. 21.

10. Boot, "We Are Winning. Why We Haven't Won," p. 33.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

12. See e.g. James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein*, pp. 45-67.

13. See St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX, chapter 12, available online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120119.htm>.

14. George Weigel, "Just War and Iraq Wars," *First Things* (April 2007): 14-20, at 15. This article is also available online at: http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=5465.

15. See e.g. Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War* (Yale University Press, 2004), especially the November 2003 essay, "Just and Unjust Occupations," pp. 162-168.

16. George Weigel, "Just War and Iraq Wars," p. 14.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

18. *Ibid.* Weigel details the ways in which American policy-makers' failure to devise an adequate plan for post-Saddam Iraq led to many errors, e.g. a lack of funding for reconstruction (see *ibid.* pp. 16-18).

19. *The Wall Street Journal*, "What if We Lose? The Consequences of U.S. Defeat in Iraq," available online at: <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110008124>. This editorial originally appeared in the March 22, 2007 print edition of the *Journal*. George Weigel, in the article cited above in footnote 14, lays out some of the same consequences. He argues that to answer "we're out" is "contemptible" and "dangerous." And in light of the criterion *ius post bellum* or "right intention" rightly understood, it is the worse answer from both a moral and strategic point of view (see p. 19).

20. See Steven R. Hurst and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq Calmer after 'Surge,'" *The Detroit News*, Wednesday, February 13, 2008, 4A.

21. Thomas J. Reese, S.J., "What We Owe the Iraqi People?" available online at: http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/thomas_j_reese/2007/06/what_do_we_owe_the_iraqi_peopl_1.html. See also Peter Steinfels, "A Catholic Debate Mounts on the Meaning of 'Just War,'" available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/14/us/14_beliefs.html?ex=1334203200&en=31df801765efed48&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss. This article originally appeared in the April 14, 2007 print edition of *The New York Times*.

22. Msgr. Robert W. McElroy, "Why We Must Withdraw from Iraq," *America* (April 30, 2007). This article is also available online at: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=5426. I rely on the excellent summary of McElroy's position provided by Thomas J. Reese, S.J. in his article cited above in footnote 21.

23. Wesley Morgan, "Iraq Reborn," notes the change in tactics from the first several years of the war: "The center of gravity in counterinsurgency operations is the population, not the enemy, and the objective is the population's security, not the destruction of all insurgents—an impossible goal" (p. 39).

24. See Frederick W. Kagan, "Our Friends in Baghdad," available online at: http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all.pubID.27267/pub_detail.asp. This article originally appeared in the December 21, 2007 *Wall Street Journal*.

25 Max Boot and Bing West, "Iraq's Number 1 Problem," available online at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/15351/iraqs_number_1_problem.html?breadcrumb=%2Fbios%2F5641%2Fmax_boot. This article originally appeared in *Los Angeles Times*, January 28, 2008. Many of the surveys of Iraqi public opinion that I have seen indicate that the Iraqis were rather negative about our continuing presence in their country. But these surveys were often conducted over a year before the surge went into effect and began to bring about real benefits. See e.g. the September 26, 2006 survey of Iraqi public opinion by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, "Most Iraqis Want U.S. Troops out Within a Year," available online at: http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafricara/250.php?lb=brme&pnt=250&nid=&id=&gclid=CM7enNearJECFQp7PAodhx_afg. The Sunni Arabs anti-al Qaeda movement is often referred to as the "Awakening."

26. See Michael Fumento, "The Casualties of War," *The Weekly Standard* (February 4, 2008), pp. 12-14, reporting on the discrediting of the Lancet study of war-related Iraqi deaths. This article is also available online at: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/652hcghd.asp?pg=1>. See also the coverage of this study by Neil Munro and Carl M. Cannon, "Data Bomb," *National Journal* (January 4, 2008), available online at: <http://news.nationaljournal.com/articles/databomb/index.htm>.

27. On this issue, see Frederick W. Kagan, "Reconcilable Differences," November 20, 2007, available online at: http://www.aei.org/publication/s/filter.all.pubID.27132/pub_detail.asp.

28. Gerard F. Powers, "The Dilemma of Iraq," *America* (March 6, 2007). This article is also available online at: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=4656. Once again, I rely on the excellent

summary of Powers' position provided by Thomas J. Reese, S.J. in his article cited above in footnote 21. On the day of my talk (February 19, 2008), I was informed that Powers had published another article essentially arguing along the same lines. See Gerard F. Powers, "Our Moral Duty in Iraq: How Would U.S. Withdrawal Affect the Iraqi People? America (February 18, 2008). See:http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10618. Here Powers writes: "Legally, the United States is no longer occupying Iraq, but by almost any measure Iraq is a failed state. Morally, therefore, the United States retains significant residual responsibilities to Iraqis. The Iraq intervention may have been an optional, immoral war; but given the U.S. government's shared responsibility for the ensuing crisis, its continued engagement is not an optional moral commitment."

29. See Frederick W. Kagan, Jack Keane, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Making Iraq Safe for Politics," available online at: http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.27383/pub_detail.asp. This article originally appeared in the *Washington Post*, January 22, 2008. In a promising political development in late 2007, an amnesty law was signed. Then, on February 13, 2008, ABC News reported that three further key laws were passed by Iraqi lawmakers concerning a budget for 2008, amnesty for detainees, and power sharing among the central government in Baghdad and the provinces. See Ahmed Rasheed, "Iraqi Lawmakers Pass Key Budget and Amnesty Laws," available online at: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=4278781>, and Fred Barnes, "Remember Those Benchmarks?" *The Weekly Standard* (February 25, 2008), p. 16. This article is also available online at: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/014/758phfdr.asp>.

30. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2309. I must say, with all due respect, that personally I do not think that the *Catechism's* list of just-war criteria is all that helpful. Rather, it seems somewhat incomplete. For one, it seems to omit the traditional categories of legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention (although the first is possibly implicit in #2308 and the second two possibly implicit in its treatment in #2309). Secondly, the four criteria it mentions in #2309 seem to be of a more *prudential* nature for determining whether it is morally upright to exercise "*legitimate defense by military force*," i.e. whether it is morally appropriate to have recourse to an armed response in defense, *after* war has already broken out. For example, it speaks of how "the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community

of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain.” Note the past tense in the previous sentence. The *Catechism* does not, e.g., take into consideration the problem of so-called preventative war in an age of terrorism and WMD. Would not legitimate defense today include the need to eradicate WMD *before* they are used? In 2002, however, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in personal comments saying that a unilateral attack by the U.S. on Iraq would not be morally justified, noted that the “concept of preventative war” does not appear in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see <http://www.zenit.org/article-5398?l=english>). See also George Weigel, “Just War and Preemption: Three Questions,” available online at: http://www.eppc.org/news/newsID.1407/news_detail.asp. This article originally appeared in *The Catholic Difference*, October 22, 2002. See too, James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein*, pp. 114-122.

31. Some of these situational factors would include the strain on our military, the question of whether our continued presence is causing more harm than good, and so on.

32. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2312 teaches: “The Church and human reason both assert the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflict.” Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, #79. See also *ibid.* #2313-2314. “In all military actions,” the U.S. Bishops note, “ethical norms require protecting civilians, using proportionate and discriminate force, rejecting torture, and fighting terrorism with nonmilitary means and the legitimate use of force when necessary. This is morally essential and also necessary for winning hearts and minds, especially in the struggle against terrorism” (“A Call for Bipartisan Cooperation and Responsible Transition in Iraq,” A Statement of the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, William J. Skylstad, Bishop of Spokane, November 13, 2007, available online at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2007-11%20Iraq%20Statement%20FINAL.pdf>).

33. “A Call for Bipartisan Cooperation and Responsible Transition in Iraq,” A Statement of the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, William J. Skylstad, Bishop of Spokane, November 13, 2007, emphasis added. The Bishops say that they have “called for bipartisan action for almost two years. Our country needs a new direction to reduce the war’s deadly toll and to bring our people together to deal with the conflict’s moral and human dimensions. Our nation needs a new bipartisan approach to Iraq policy based on honest and civil dialogue.”

Already one brigade that was part of the surge was brought home in December 2007; four additional brigades are expected to come home in July of 2008, conditions permitting, thus reducing troop levels to the pre-surge level of 130,000 to 135,000 (see Robert Burns, “Gates: Iraq Security Still Tenuous,” available online at: <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gnPpwRiOsji0z57NytZve0-sHMgD8UNUHT00>).

34. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

35. *Ibid.*

36. In a February 2007 statement issued after President Bush announced the surge, the U.S. Bishops spoke of various “benchmarks” for a “responsible transition.” These included: “minimally acceptable levels of *security*; *economic reconstruction* that creates employment for Iraqis; and *political solutions* that help overcome divisions, broaden participation, and increase respect for religious freedom and basic human rights.” They also noted that a “responsible transition” involved meeting four other key challenges: fighting terrorism responsibly, protecting religious freedom, aiding refugees and asylum seekers, and meeting other national responsibilities here at home (The Bishops briefly describe each of these). See “Questions and Answers on the War in Iraq” (Revised February 2007), available online at: http://nccbuscc.org/comm/q&airaqwar_revised.pdf. See also Gerard F. Powers, “Our Moral Duty in Iraq,” available online at: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10618, especially the section “What the United States Owes the Iraqis.”

37. Weigel, “Just War and Iraq Wars,” p. 20. Weigel also treats the question of what would happen if, in any event, the surge were to fail (see pp. 19-20).

38. On September 18, 2007, a conference co-sponsored by the Fordham Center for Religion and Culture and the Joan B. Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame entitled, “Exit or No Exit: Morality and Withdrawal from Iraq,” was held at Fordham University. I did not have access to the papers that were read at this conference in writing my article. A brief article on the event, however, is available online at: http://www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/public_affairs/archives/2007/archive_975.asp. For a longer treatment, see the *Catholic News Service* article by Beth Griffin, “U.S. Has Moral Obligation to Iraqi

People,” available online at: <http://www.catholicreview.org/subpages/storyworldnew.aspx?action=1880>. On March 18, 2008, a conference sponsored by the Boisi Center for Religion and Public Life titled, “What Do We Owe the Iraqis?” took place at Boston College.