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Until Peace Breaks Out - The Heart of the Matter

Don P. Diffine Ph.D.

Harding University, ddiffine@harding.edu

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UNTIL PEACE BREAKS OUT



by
D.P. Diffine, Ph.D.

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parts of this book should be addressed
in writing to the author as follows:

D.P. Diffine
Harding University, Box 12245
Searcy, AR 72149-0001
(501) 279-4470
Fax (501) 279-4195
ddiffine@harding.edu

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the clouds of war on the horizon, we Americans are faced with a profound and perplexing dilemma. It should be approached with great care, caution, and consideration.

Whatever our conclusions on the matter, the purpose of this monograph is certainly not to sanction every action, thought or deed committed down through the ages in the name of warfare. Nor is it the goal of this publication to give credence to all that has ever been written, said, or done by those who have tried to embrace peace. Alas, on either side of the barricade were some who have neither understood nor cared.

We may, in time, and with reason and good conscience, be able to demonstrate the clarity provided long ago by Justice Felix Frankfurter: "Democracy is always a beckoning goal, not a safe harbor. For freedom is an unremitting endeavor, never a final achievement. That is why no office in the land is more important than that of being a citizen."

And so, with assassinations, wars, and worldwide bloodshed in general taking up the headlines, isn't it reassuring to ponder the words of historian Will Durant? "Civilization," he declared, "is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shouting and doing the things historians usually record, while on the banks, unnoticed, people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry and even whittle statues. The story of civilization is the story of what happens on the banks."

No one in his right mind would love war for its own sake. "It is well that war is so terrible that we grow too fond of it," observed General Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Nonetheless, because of a new war, today there are some empty chairs in many family circles. To those families we should extend our love, sympathy, prayers, support and humanitarian aid which have long been the hallmark of American voluntarism.

II. WAR AND PEACE

Few of us in the United States have slept well lately. We have had that socked-in-the-stomach feeling over a possible successful conclusion to the Persian Gulf War which began 12 years ago. There was no peace treaty then, only an uneasy armistice. What in the world is at stake as so-called Operation Desert Swarm descends on Iraq?

And how shall we gauge the future of our own land so recently visited with terrorism against our twin pillars of capitalism? Since then, there have been some very dark days, but also some incredibly bright hours.

Words such as “prayer,” “God,” and “America” are now being used in the same sentences in many public forums. Thankfully, few seem to object. The Scriptures certainly hint that in clashes between good and evil on this earth, duly constituted governments are the vehicle through which to right the wrong done to innocent people.

Seventeenth century legal theorist Hugo Grotius, the father of international law, listed six conditions that a “just war” must meet: (1) the cause must be just; (2) warfare must be conducted in proportion to the injury or threat; (3) the war must be winnable; (4) war must be declared publicly and (5) by a legitimate authority; and (6) the war must be a last resort. It’s a tough call.

The very term “Wartime Economics” itself is often a contradiction. This is the language of war: compulsion, victory, defeat, survival, destruction, violence, waste, tactics, assault, defense, fear, and yes, patriotism. However, the language of economics

is very different; voluntary action, gain, loss, creating, producing, distributing, consuming, peaceful work, industriousness, commerce, free trade, and consumer sovereignty. No wonder we feel pulled every which way but loose, as we try to sort it all out.

We do know that because of terrorists without borders, and their enablers, we have been violated through mass assassinations, and we have lost our innocence. The stakes are high. Josiah Bailey said it best long ago:

The American Republic and American Business are Siamese Twins; they came out of the same womb at the same time; they are born in the same principles and when American business dies, the American Republic will die, and when the American Republic dies, American Business will die.

When the proverbial sand settles, will the reasons why we are “over there” add up? We need to acknowledge all the reasons, to avoid cruelly punishing ourselves and others with false guilt. We will still have some collateral frustration to work through--to keep us from being literally sick at heart. There is even a medical term for that. It is now known as the “CNN/Fox News Syndrome.”

III. WHICH WAY TO THE FRONT?

Lest we Americans develop a national schizophrenia over concluding the war in Iraq, let's start with a reason that has been frequently cited. We're "over there," first of all, to preserve "...Truth, Justice, and the American Way." Is there some truth to the point? Yes, and it is probably ample reason to send our finest into battle. However, there are many other reasons. All are related; some are more compelling than others. Together they join into a compelling mosaic.

America is not a warmongering nation, but rather a cautious trustee of our planet. Only the United States is strong enough to be the guardian of justice. As our President stated during Operation Desert Storm, "...Such is the price of leadership." We desire so much to live in a world where fighting will not be necessary. Terrorists and their enablers do not view things that way, raging against the very institutions and accomplishments that, deep down, they wish they could have.

Can we fight everybody's war? No. Any American president would be impeached for trying that. Therefore, we have to fight only those wars in which we have a vital national interest. If we learned anything after Desert Storm, where a ruthless aggressor is involved, a bogus peace can lead to a bigger war later.

Additionally, sanctions don't restrain a leader who protects his military first while sacrificing his civilian population. We now know that there can be no trusting deals any terrorist leader makes under diplomatic pressure. Such false trust would be an appeaser's peace, fated to erupt later in a sucker's war.

After September 11, 2001, we also came to know that we were no longer insulated on the east and west by oceans and on the north and south by weak neighbors. So, in late 2001, Operation Enduring Freedom became nothing less than an effort to sustain the well-being of billions of people, including Americans.

Anything less than defeat for terrorist leaders would have the Arab world and the Western democracies back under the heels of the biggest bullies on the regional playground who would soon become more bold, reckless, and unpredictable. History tells us that aggressors through the ages have advanced in the face of weakness and retreated in the face of strength. Always.

We would like to have these fine Americans back right away, but we cannot simply withdraw and cross our fingers that there will be no more such crises. We have embarked on a course that will continue to require collective resolve, diplomatic savvy, and mega quantities of manpower and equipment.

IV. WAVING A WHITE FLAG

Have the peace lovers done their homework? Wishing and hoping and longing for peace are wonderful personal traits; however, such are very shaky foreign policy if one examines history. Alas, war hath no fury like non-combatants. Some shrill voices would exclaim, "If we kill, we are just like them!" Well, we can let them kill us. We'll be dead; they'll be alive. That's being different.

To this writer, it makes little sense for the sheep and lambs to be signing petitions and waving placards in favor of "vegetarianism," if the wolves don't care. Some day, we are told, the lion will lie down with the lamb. Fine. We should be the lion, just in case that lamb turns out to be another wolf in sheep's clothing. Remember 9/11!

It may feel good to sing the whining lyrics of "Give Peace a Chance," play bongo drums, rattle tambourines, and hold up daisies. Peace demonstrators can burn their flags if they want to; it won't necessarily look good on their resumes. They run the risk of dishonoring themselves with such political tantrums. Sincerity and intelligence don't always come packaged together.

Other than having the appearance of extending aid and comfort to the enemy, peace demonstrations don't accomplish much toward a genuine, lasting peace that comes through victory. And honestly, celebrities don't know more on the subject than anyone else; they are just better known. That's all. Being President of the United States is far different than playing one on TV.

What motivates some of these demonstrators--a reasoned understanding and concern for the future of civilized nations, or a partisan dislike of a certain American administration? The question almost answers itself. Theodore Roosevelt was right on target in observing that, "The man who loves other countries as much as he loves his own stands on the level with the man who loves other women as much as he loves his own wife."

History can be a good teacher here. In 1938, Germany gobbled up neighboring Czechoslovakia; the West did nothing. A year later, much stronger, Germany began its invasions of Poland, followed by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, and threatened Great Britain. If only we and they had dealt with Germany early on. At great cost and personal sacrifice, the United States liberated and rebuilt Europe. And all we ever asked for, as Secretary of State Collin Powell recently chided the French, was "...enough room to bury our dead!"

Although we Americans often have our differences, we still join together in time of crises. Especially at these times, our strength is awesome. Among all the world's nations, America still stands out in front. We should never forget that we are Americans, first, last, and always.

V. CONNECTING THE DOTS

Was it being inconsistent to expect a painless solution to that 1990-91 Persian Gulf War? To some extent, we created that Persian Gulf situation ourselves--all the coalition countries did--starting a decade earlier by arming Iraq against Iran. This isn't the first time; history does repeat itself.

Who hasn't criticized General Custer's charge in 1876? But where do we suppose the Indians assembled at Little Big Horn obtained all those repeating rifles that General Custer's men lacked? From gun-running Americans. Go figure. Truly, the 1990-91 allied coalition members were unwitting partners in creating Iraq's fortress in the first place (and a decade earlier) as we feared Iran would defeat Iraq.

Iraq's aircraft and tanks are Russian-and French-made. Italy and France designed Iraq's nuclear reactor. Those chemical plants were constructed by Germany. U.S.-made computers, dual-use chemicals, and U.S. grown food flowed into Iraq throughout the 1980's. The British engineered Iraq's underground bunkers. A similar approach in the 1980's, albeit sincerely attempting to arm Afghans against the USSR invaders, created the climate for the 1990's hornets' nests of terrorism in Afghanistan.

Consider this fable of a knight and his men who have returned to their castle after a long hard day of fighting. "How are we faring?" asks the King. "Sire," replies the knight, "We have been looting and pillaging on your behalf all day, burning the towns of your enemies in the West." "What?!" Shrieks the King, "I don't have any enemies to the West!" "Oops," says the knight, "Well, you do now."

Nevertheless, and despite all the hindsight, the U.S. economy cannot thrive in the long run except under genuinely peaceful conditions. The very foundation of our economic lives--our freedom of choice to manage our individual, business, and national affairs--must be a direct result of sustained peace in our time.

There may not be any quick and painless way for the Coalition of the Willing to win the war against international terrorism. As our American expeditionary force goes forward into battle, we do what we can. We arm them with the best technology and hopefully ourselves with Thomas Jefferson's watchword, "Eternal vigilance is the price for peace."

VI. OIL IN THE FAMILY

Is it America's primary economic goal to guarantee western nations a stable supply of reasonably priced oil? To be sure. Two-thirds of the world's oil stock is in the Persian Gulf, as is one-fourth of the world's current flow of crude oil.

Our lack of resolve to tap our own recoverable reserves in Alaska, combined with our willingness to do business with OPEC, as if a cartel is an honest and legal marketing situation, has contributed to the power and pervasiveness of OPEC for three decades. Additionally, we import half our oil, but even achieving self-sufficiency would not fully protect us from war in the Gulf.

Will we have another spike in energy prices because we still import too much of our oil and are wasteful? We are much more energy efficient, per capita, than most of our major trading partners. The planet's chronic energy crisis is that oil provides 40 percent of the energy and that 65 percent of verified oil reserves are in the Persian Gulf, known by its shifting sands of strife for millennia.

Not to go unnoticed logistically, during Desert Storm in 1990-91, the only refinery in the entire Persian Gulf region that could produce jet fuel was in Kuwait. Oil reserves in Iraq and Kuwait alone are 200 billion barrels. We use 17 million barrels a day. We could not simply withdraw and cross our fingers that there would be no more such crises. What happened in Kuwait in 1990 was a threat to the entire Arab world. Later, it could have become a threat to the rest of the globe.

The plot thickens. A year before the invasion of Kuwait, and at two Arab summits, Iraq's leader argued that by combining the OPEC quotas of the two countries, he could force oil prices up to \$30 a barrel, double his development budget and still pay off his war debts in four years.

In the process, he would expand his coastline from 37 miles to 225 miles and wind up with a deepwater port. All he had to do was take over Kuwait to whom he owed \$18 billion in loans from the Iran-Iraq war. His options were clear. He could repay the loan or he would rob the bank.

In 1990, Egypt's President reportedly told a U.S. Senator that Iraq's leader once took him aside and proposed a military coalition of Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Jordan to pool their weapons and carve up Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. On another occasion, Iraq's leader allegedly offered Yemen two of Saudi Arabia's southern provinces. Alas, so much friction over such a slippery substance.

VI. HIGH OCTANE

Let us not gloss over the many other reasons why we went “over there” to the Persian Gulf in 1990-91: to protect the interests of America’s friends in the Middle East, to protect those oil fields and oil company investments, and to create that elusive “New World Order.”

Although domino theories have been less popular recently with the thaw in the Cold War, consider this sequence of events. A major oil cutoff would surely hobble Japan and energy-insufficient Europe. As major trading partners, their economic implosion could throw our economy into a freefall, jeopardizing jobs.

The loss of control of the oil fields in the Persian Gulf could shake the foundations of the international banking system. Why? There are scores of oil-importing, underdeveloped countries which owe tens of billions of dollars to overexposed major banks. A sharp, sustained increase in crude oil prices, and those nations may not be able to service their debts.

The world’s biggest and most vulnerable banks would take significant broadsides. If the banks are pushed to the edge, those who suffer won’t just be bank stockholders. We, all of us, our enterprises, and our loved ones could also suffer, at least temporarily, due to financial deflation and confusion.

What would have happened if Iraq developed a monopoly on Persian Gulf oil in 1990? It could have held captive the world’s economy and severely affected industrial output. It could have stifled the coalition’s military power and will to resist.

Was the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War about cheap crude oil? No, it was about heading off the terrible misuse of oil power. We did not send nearly 400,000 Americans to the Persian Gulf just to hold oil prices at \$20 a barrel.

If the price were all that mattered, we could rely on the marketplace. Even for producers, excessively high prices don't maximize profits. They drive away buyers by promoting conservation and inducing new oil production.

With Iraq's treasury rebuilt, would they finance more terrorism by stopping oil shipments sporadically to coerce Western support for his agenda? Indeed, Iraq might have decided that oil at \$50 a barrel suited its politics, even though it's not profit maximizing.

VIII. GIVE WAR A CHANCE?

When I was in the U.S. Air Force and stationed at a Strategic Air Command base as a young officer, our motto was this: "Prepared for War to Preserve the Peace." It worked.

Our young men and women were there in 1990-91 to keep Iraq from controlling two-thirds of global oil reserves and from using that control to blackmail the industrial world possibly with, yes, dangerous chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, by supplying them to a new generation of terrorists without borders.

The case for intervention then was, frankly, that Iraq (already possessing the world's fourth largest military) would be militarily, politically, and geographically harder to fight later. What we did was a pragmatic attempt to maintain access to the oil on which the world depends.

It was nothing less than an effort to sustain the well-being of hundreds of millions of people in the West. Prosperity in the United States is heavily linked to countries that are heavily dependent on Mid East oil. American troops could be rotated into the Persian Gulf for years.

It is precisely at times of national stress and anxiety that a renewal of faith and purpose is required. America remains an inspiration to millions; but ingratitude, misunderstanding, even hatred may have to be endured. You see, "Liberty means responsibility," said George Bernard Shaw. "That is why most men dread it."

Our President deserves the support of all Americans. True, the last chapter hasn't been written yet, and won't be for years, perhaps decades. World War III has not started. The present military action should avert World War III. Those wonderful men and women, now serving on a rotational basis in the expanded War on Terrorism at great personal and economic sacrifice, once again "...won't be back 'til it's over, over there."

Please consider, dear reader, John Quincy Adams' haunting mandate from yesteryear, "Posterity--you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it."

IX. THE WHOLE ANTHEM TELLS ALL

How shall we then deal with such traumatizing issues of war and peace? Even our National Anthem ends with a question mark, doesn't it? "O say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave...?" The answer in this patriotic period of great uncertainty is a resounding, "Yes!" Here are the rest of the lyrics of the last three verses of our National Anthem, courtesy of Francis Scott Key:

On the shore dimly seen thro' the
mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in
dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er
the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half
discloses?

Now it catches the gleam of the
morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines on
the stream:

'Tis the star-spangled banner: O,
long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave!

And where is that band who so
vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the
battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave
us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul
footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and
slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom
of the grave:

And the star-spangled banner in
triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave.

O, thus be it ever when freemen shall
stand,
Between their lov'd homes and the
war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the
heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and
preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our
cause is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our
trust."

And the star-spangled banner in
triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave!

Let's get personal; what about you, dear reader? Do you know of a better flag to wave? That's the burning issue. What will you do with your liberty banner especially in times of war? Will you show your true colors? If so, then three cheers for both you and the red, white and blue! Put out more flags. Let the bands play. Sing about it. Take a stand. We in America shall remain the land of the free, because we are, indeed, the home of the brave!

X. THE PRICE OF ENDURING FREEDOM

“What have you done for liberty?” asked William Jennings Bryan nearly a century ago. “If nothing, what can freedom mean to you?” It seems that no generation of Americans has talked as much about freedom as the present one, and yet, in the normal times, pre-9/11, many showed a great readiness to abandon it. Even as he referred to his own English roots, Edmund Burke dutifully observed, “With all of her faults, she is my country still.”

Why do we knock ourselves when we are the envy of the world? Why should we accommodate others who out of ignorance or jealousy also pile on? We have so much for which to be thankful:

A country of unbounded beauty; almost unlimited natural resources; a standard of living beyond the dream of kings; a judicial system that is the envy of the rest of the world; food so plentiful overeating is a major problem; food processing advances which give us all-season menus; clothing that is more durable, longer lasting, and easier to maintain; a press nobody can dominate; a ballot box nobody can stuff; churches of our choice; 130 million jobs; freedom to go anywhere we want, with the planes, cars, and highways to get us there; automobile tires that last as long as some cars; Social Security; Medicare; Medicaid; hybrid synthetics, metals and plastics that can even replace some body parts; near-miracle drugs that can help us live longer and feel better; a 60 percent increase in longevity over

a century ago; unemployment insurance; public and private schools, scholarships, etc.

Yes, we literally are a people “free” to do anything we want, if we have the “enterprise” to do it. As the war clouds hover overhead, let’s get back in touch with our heritage and celebrate our remarkably durable Republic. Remember, it’s our First Amendment right to speak out about the good things, too. It’s guaranteed in writing.

This is a very patriotic period of our lives. We may not all remember the dates we learned in our history courses, and we will most certainly forget much of the details of our national development. However, each and every American should try to live up to the ideals that have made our American heritage worth defending: self-reliance, personal courage; love for country; faith in God; responsible freedom; limited constitutional government; and free, private enterprise. Courage.

XI. SCRIPTURES FOR THE HEART

What does our nation's first textbook say of the subject of God and country?

Righteousness exalteth a nation;
but sin is a reproach to any people.

- Proverbs 14:34

Blessed is the nation whose God
is the Lord; and the people whom he
hath chosen for his own inheritance.

- Psalm 33:12

In those days there was no King in
Israel; every man did that which was
right in his own eyes.

- Judges 21:25

If my people, which are called by
my name, shall humble themselves,
and pray, and seek my face, and
turn from their wicked ways; then I
will hear them from heaven, and will
forgive their sin, and heal their land.

- II Chronicles 7:14

Except the Lord build the house,
they labor in vain that build it; except
the Lord keep the city, the watchman
waketh but in vain.

- Psalm 127:1

Oh that my people had harkened
unto me... and had walked in my
ways.

- Psalm 81:13

Then saith he unto them, Render
therefore unto Caesar the things
which are Caesar's; and unto God the
things that are God's.

- Matthew 22:21

Let every soul be subject unto the highest powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God.

- Romans 13:1

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.

- I Peter 2:17

Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 8:35-39

XII. PRAYER TO GOD OF OUR FATHERS

Former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, Peter Marshall, once delivered this Independence Day prayer:

God of our Fathers, whose Almighty Hand has made and preserved our Nation, grant that our people may understand what it is they celebrate.

May they remember how bitterly our freedom was won, the down payment that was made for it, the installments that have been made since this Republic was born, and the price that must yet be paid for our liberty.

May freedom be seen not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to please do what is right. May it ever be understood that our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else. May our faith be something that is not merely stamped upon our coins, but expressed in our lives.

To the extent that America honors Thee, will Thou bless America and keep her as Thou has kept her free, and make her good as Thou hast made her rich...

And all the people said, "AMEN."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Don Diffine is Professor of Economics at Harding University, and Director of the Belden Center for Private Enterprise Education. Senior Research Associate of Harding University's American Studies Institute, Dr. Diffine is listed in the Heritage Foundation's Guide to Public Policy Experts.

A member of Arkansas Governor Beebe's Council of Economic Advisors, Dr. Diffine has provided Congressional testimony on business problems, economic impact statements, and inflation-recession dilemmas. He has 10 books and 20 monographs in print and has served on the Board of Directors of the Arkansas Council on Economic Education.

The recipient of the \$7,500 Freedoms Foundation Principle Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education, Dr. Diffine received 16 additional Freedoms Foundation awards in Non-profit Publications, Economic Education, Public Affairs-Advertising, Public Address, and Published Works. He is the faculty winner of a \$1,000 First Place prize in a national essay contest judged by Nobel Economist Dr. Milton Friedman.

In 2000, Diffine was inducted into the Samuel Moore Walton Free Enterprise Hall of Fame. He received the "Champion of Enterprise" award in 1995 from the Students in Free Enterprise Hall of Fame in Kansas City. The First Annual Distinguished Scholar Award was also presented in 1998 to Dr. Diffine in Cleveland, Ohio, by the Association of Private Enterprise Education.

Dr. Diffine's wife, Dion, is from Kailua, Hawaii. She is a retired math teacher from Searcy Public Schools. The Diffines have two children: David, a physician; and Danielle, an accountant.