

hevelone: What do we Americans owe the Iraqis morally, legally and politically as a result of our 2003 military invasion?

bacevich: The first thing that I would like to see is that we fund the running of the camps. Let's provide shelter for refugees and they are living in camps. One would imagine that the camps are squalid and abysmal. If we have an obligation to those people, good, let's fund the running of the camps. Let's provide shelter for refu-

have back in Iraq. So let's bring a couple million Iraqi refugees into the country.

Or, on the assumption that some day this war is going to end, let's begin setting aside the funds that would rebuild Iraq. We're spending probably something on the order of about \$150 billion a year to fund the war. Why don't we just earmark three or four years worth of war spending about half a trillion dollars. That would be a practical way to repair.

Now, you're smiling as I say this, because you know and I know that there's no way in hell that we're going to pay for the refugee camps. There's no way in hell that we're going to allow two or two and a half million Iraqi refugees into this country. And there's no way in hell that we're going to allocate half a trillion dollars to rebuild the country that we have helped to devastate.

And I think that really gets to the point that—and I say this with sadness—all the talk about acquitting a moral obligation to the Iraqi people really boils down to just talk. As a practical matter, there is zero interest in our political leadership, and minimal interest in the country at large in actually doing anything about this. Although in a sense that's not surprising because my own sense is that in politics, and especially in international politics, moral considerations seldom have more than a marginal significance in the calculations of policy.

hevelone:

institutions that command some modicum of legitimacy, I actually don't think there's much we can do to bring those institutions into existence. I think that it's the work of the Iraqis. At best we can provide a little encouragement around the margins.

invasion and ongoing military operations in Iraq. How much truth do you think there is in these assertions?

bacevich: Everybody except Vice President Cheney now accepts that Saddam Hussein had zero involvement in 9/11, minimal contact with al-Qaeda and in that sense the invasion of Iraq has nothing to do with the global war on terror. In another sense it does, and that's the sense in which the strategy concocted by the Bush Administration after 9/11, to prevent a recurrence of 9/11, was based on this wild notion that the exercise of American military power could bring