

# **America's Priorities in the War on Terror**

## **Islamists, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan**

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Summary: The Bush administration's arrogant bunker mentality has been counterproductive at home and abroad. American foreign policy needs to change its tone and attitude, open up, and reach out. In particular, it should focus on eliminating Islamist terrorists, stabilizing Iraq, containing Iran, and toughening its stance with Pakistan.

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The United States, as the world's only superpower, is less vulnerable to military defeat. But it is more vulnerable to the animosity of other countries. Much like a top high school student, if it is modest about its abilities and achievements, if it is generous in helping others, it is loved. But if it attempts to dominate others, it is despised.

American foreign policy needs to change its tone and attitude, open up, and reach out. The Bush administration's arrogant bunker mentality has been counterproductive at home and abroad. My administration will recognize that the United States' main fight today does not pit us against the world but pits the world against the terrorists. At the same time, my administration will never surrender any of our sovereignty, which is why I was the first presidential candidate to oppose ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty, which would endanger both our national security and our economic interests.

A more successful U.S. foreign policy needs to better explain Islamic jihadism to the American people. Given how Americans have thrived on diversity -- religious, ethnic, racial -- it takes an enormous leap of imagination to understand what Islamic terrorists are about, that they really do want to kill every last one of us and destroy civilization as we know it. If they are willing to kill their own children by letting them detonate suicide bombs, then they will also be willing to kill our children for their misguided cause. The Bush administration has never adequately explained the theology and ideology behind Islamic terrorism or convinced us of its ruthless fanaticism. The first rule of war is "know your enemy," and most Americans do not know theirs. To grasp the magnitude of the threat, we first have to understand what makes Islamic terrorists tick. Very few Americans are familiar with the writings of Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian radical executed in 1966, or the Muslim Brotherhood, whose call to active jihad influenced Osama bin Laden and the rise of al Qaeda. Qutb raged against the decadence and sin he saw around him and sought to restore the "pure" Islam of the seventh century through a theocratic caliphate without national borders. He saw nothing decadent or sinful in murdering in order to achieve that end. America's culture of life stands in stark contrast to the jihadists' culture of death.

The United States' biggest challenge in the Arab and Muslim worlds is the lack of a viable moderate alternative to radicalism. On the one hand, there are radical Islamists willing to fight dictators with terrorist tactics that moderates are too humane to use. On the other, there are repressive regimes that stay in power by force and through the suppression of basic human rights -- many of which we support by buying oil, such as the Saudi government, or with foreign aid, such as the Egyptian government, our second-largest recipient of aid.

Although we cannot export democracy as if it were Coca-Cola or KFC, we can nurture moderate forces in places where al Qaeda is seeking to replace modern evil with medieval evil. Such moderation may not look or function like our system -- it may be a benevolent oligarchy or more tribal than individualistic -- but both for us and for the peoples of those countries, it will be better than the dictatorships they have now or the theocracy they would have under radical Islamists. The potential for such moderation to emerge is visible in the way that Sunni tribal leaders in Iraq have turned against al Qaeda to work with us; they could not stand the thought of living under

such fundamentalism and brutality. The people of Afghanistan turned against the Taliban for the same reason. To know these extremists is not to love them.

As president, my goal in the Arab and Muslim worlds will be to calibrate a course between maintaining stability and promoting democracy. It is self-defeating to attempt too much too soon: doing so could mean holding elections that the extremists would win. But it is also self-defeating to do nothing. We must first destroy existing terrorist groups and then attack the underlying conditions that breed them: the lack of basic sanitation, health care, education, jobs, a free press, fair courts -- which all translates into a lack of opportunity and hope. The United States' strategic interests as the world's most powerful country coincide with its moral obligations as the richest. If we do not do the right thing to improve life in the Muslim world, the terrorists will step in and do the wrong thing.

#### IF FORCE, THEN OVERWHELMING

For too long, we have been constrained because our dependence on imported oil has forced us to support repressive regimes and conduct our foreign policy with one hand tied behind our back. I will free that hand from its oil-soaked rope and reach out to moderates in the Arab and Muslim worlds with both. I want to treat Saudi Arabia the way we treat Sweden, and that will require the United States to be energy independent. The first thing I will do as president is send Congress my comprehensive plan for achieving energy independence within ten years of my inauguration. We will explore, we will conserve, and we will pursue all types of alternative energy: nuclear, wind, solar, ethanol, hydrogen, clean coal, biomass, and biodiesel.

Supporting Islamic moderates and moving toward energy independence will not protect us from the terrorists who already exist. These enemies, who plot and train in small, scattered cells, can be tracked down and eliminated by the CIA, U.S. Special Forces, and the military forces of the coalition countries united to rid the world of this scourge. We can achieve a tremendous amount with swift and surgical air strikes and commando raids by our elite units. But these operations demand first-rate intelligence. When the Cold War ended, we cut back our human intelligence, just as we cut back our armed forces, and these reductions have come back to haunt us. I will strengthen both.

The "peace dividend" from the fall of the Soviet Union has become a war deficit with the rise of Islamic terrorism. We did not send enough troops to Iraq initially. We still do not have enough troops in Afghanistan and are losing hard-won gains there as foreign fighters pour in and the number of Iraq-style suicide attacks increases. Our current active armed forces simply are not large enough. We have relied far too heavily on the National Guard and the Reserves and worn them out.

The Bush administration plans to increase the size of the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps by about 92,000 troops over the next five years. We can and must do this in two to three years. I recognize the challenges of increasing our enlistments without lowering standards and of expanding training facilities and personnel, and that is one of the reasons why we must increase our military budget. Right now, we spend about 3.9 percent of our GDP on defense, compared with about six percent in 1986, under President Ronald Reagan. We need to return to that six percent level. And we must stop using active-duty forces for nation building and return to our policy of using other government agencies to build schools, hospitals, roads, sewage treatment plants, water filtration systems, electrical facilities, and legal and banking systems. We must marshal the goodwill, ingenuity, and power of our governmental and nongovernmental organizations in coordinating and implementing these essential nonmilitary functions.

If I ever have to undertake a large invasion, I will follow the Powell Doctrine and use overwhelming force. The notion of an occupation with a "light footprint," which was our model for Iraq, is a contradiction in terms. Liberating a country and occupying it are two different missions. Our invasion of Iraq went well militarily, but the occupation has destroyed the country politically, economically, and socially. In the former Yugoslavia, we sent 20 peacekeeping soldiers for every thousand civilians. In Iraq, an equivalent ratio would have meant

sending a force of 450,000 U.S. troops. Unlike President George W. Bush, who marginalized General Eric Shinseki, the former army chief of staff, when he recommended sending several hundred thousand troops to Iraq, I would have met with Shinseki privately and carefully weighed his advice. Our generals must be independent advisers, always free to speak without fear of retribution or dismissal.

## SECURING IRAQ

As president, I will not withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq any faster than General David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander there, recommends. I will bring our troops home based on the conditions on the ground, not the calendar on the wall. It is still too soon to reduce the U.S. counterterrorism mission and pass the torch of security to the Iraqis. If we do not preserve and expand population security, by maintaining the significant number of forces required, we risk losing all our hard-won gains. These are significant but tenuous.

Seeing Iraqi Sunnis in Anbar, Diyala, and parts of Baghdad reject al Qaeda and join our forces, often at tremendous risk to themselves, has been a truly extraordinary shift. Those who once embraced al Qaeda members as liberators now see them for what these radicals are: brutal oppressors who want to take Iraq back to the seventh century. And this development is serving as a model for turning Shiite tribes against their militants. Despite what the gloomy Democrats in the United States profess, reconciliation is happening in Iraq, only it is bottom up rather than top down, and since it comes directly from the people, it can end the violence faster. Benchmarks are being reached in fact, if not in law. As Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, told Congress last September, oil revenues are being distributed, de-Baathification is being reversed, and the Shiite-dominated government is giving financial resources to the provinces, including Sunni areas.

The Kurdish north is the most peaceful and prosperous part of Iraq. We must not allow the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), the Kurdish Marxist terrorist group responsible for almost 40,000 deaths since the mid-1980s, to jeopardize that achievement. The PKK is losing support among mainstream Turkish Kurds: they have made great strides economically, culturally, and politically in the past decade, and many are renouncing violence. We must encourage Turkey to continue to improve life for its Kurds, and we must encourage the Turkish Kurds to address their grievances through the political process, including through the 20 deputies currently representing them in parliament. On the Iraqi side of the border, Turkey provides 80 percent of the foreign investment in the Kurdish region, and the Iraqi Kurds do not want to jeopardize that relationship.

I support providing the Turks with actionable intelligence to go after the PKK with limited air strikes and commando raids but would prefer to train and equip Iraqi Kurds to fight the PKK and rid themselves of this menace. I regret that it took the deployment of 100,000 Turkish troops to the border with Iraq, and the PKK problem becoming a crisis, for the Bush administration to give the issue the attention it deserves. We should have put more pressure on the Iraqi government, including the Kurdish authorities, to deal with the PKK earlier. Our special envoy on the issue, retired General Joseph Ralston, quit his post last October out of frustration over the passivity of both the U.S. and the Iraqi governments. Some crises cannot be averted; this one could and should have been.

Withdrawing from Iraq before the country is stable and secure would have serious strategic consequences for us and horrific humanitarian consequences for the Iraqis. Iraq's neighbors on all sides would be drawn into the war and face refugee crises as a result of fleeing Iraqis. Iraq is the crossroads where Arabs meet Persians and Kurds, and Sunnis meet Shiites. When we deposed Saddam Hussein, we emphasized the potentially dramatic upside of Iraq's centrality in the region: the country could be a prime place to establish democracy and have it spread from. Today, we face the dramatic downside: Iraq's centrality makes the country the perfect place for terrorists to create anarchy and have it spread. Those who say that we do not owe the Iraqis anything more are ignoring what we owe our own children and grandchildren in terms of security.

## CONTAINING IRAN

Americans have urgent concerns about Iran's military and financial support for Shiite militants in Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. And we have urgent concerns about Iran's development of nuclear weapons, especially since more is at stake than just Iran's progress: faced with a nuclear Shiite Persian power, Sunni Arab regimes will feel the need to match it.

The Bush administration has properly said that it will not take the military option for dealing with Iran off the table. Neither will I. But if we do not put other options on the table, eventually a military strike will become the only viable one. And nothing would make bin Laden happier than this outcome; he would welcome war between the United States and Iran. Indeed, al Qaeda and Iran seek control of the same territory: what Iran envisions as its Shiite crescent is a large part of what would be the Sunni caliphate that al Qaeda seeks to create from Spain to Indonesia. Both Iran and al Qaeda seek not just to dominate Israel but to destroy it and control the Palestinians. And I will not waver in standing by our ally Israel. The main difference between these two enemies is that al Qaeda is a movement that must be destroyed, whereas Iran is a nation that just has to be contained.

In order to contain Iran, it is essential to win in Iraq. When we overthrew Saddam, whose regime was a bulwark against Iran, we upset the regional balance of power. Now, we must stabilize and strengthen Iraq not just for its own security but for the security of its neighbors, the region, and ourselves. We cannot allow Iran to push its theocracy into Iraq and then expand it further west.

Another way to contain Iran is through diplomacy. We must be as aggressive diplomatically as we have been militarily since 9/11. We must intensify our diplomatic efforts with China, India, Russia, South Korea, and European states and persuade them to put more economic pressure on Iran. These countries have been far more interested in pursuing profit than preventing proliferation. They must realize that if the United States does end up taking military action, they will bear some responsibility for having failed to maximize peaceful options.

I welcome the Bush administration's new sanctions against Iran and its decision to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction and its al Quds force as a supporter of terrorism. (The Democrats who claim that such measures are a step toward war are deluded: these moves are an attempt to use economic power instead of, not as a prelude to, using military power.) We must also put more of our money where our mouth is and encourage our state and private pension funds to divest themselves of Iran-related assets.

Since the United States does no business directly with Iran, these sanctions will have an impact only if other countries honor them. United Nations sanctions will have to remain weak if China and Russia are to support them, but I have greater hope for tougher ones from the European Union, Iran's biggest trading partner. With Nicolas Sarkozy as president of France, we now have a much more willing ally.

I am less hopeful that Russia will be helpful. Since Russia benefits from high energy prices, President Vladimir Putin has more incentives to keep energy markets jittery than to resolve the crisis with Iran. Russia also profits handsomely from selling weapons to Iran, mostly air defense systems intended to protect Iran from possible U.S. air strikes. I support going forward with the current plan to set up ten missile interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic to protect Europe from Iranian missiles. Putin opposes an antimissile system in the former Soviet satellite states (even though we have offered to share the technology with the Russians) and our potential use of Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic, as a staging ground for an attack on Iran.

We must remember that with the collapse of the Soviet Union came the revival of Russia, which has always had both imperialist ambitions and an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West. Tsarist history is a case study in the struggle between westernizers and Slavophiles. The push and pull will continue, bringing good days and bad in our relations with Russia. Overall, things will be better than during the Cold War because, much as we do not want another 9/11, Putin does not want another terrorist attack like the 2004 school siege in Beslan. But I see him for what he is: a staunch nationalist in a country that has no democratic tradition. He will do everything he

can to reassert Russia's power -- militarily, economically, diplomatically.

Sun-tzu's ancient wisdom is relevant today: "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." Yet we have not had diplomatic relations with Iran in almost 30 years; the U.S. government usually communicates with the Iranian government through the Swiss embassy in Tehran. When one stops talking to a parent or a friend, differences cannot be resolved and relationships cannot move forward. The same is true for countries. The reestablishment of diplomatic ties will not occur automatically or without the Iranians' making concessions that serve to create a less hostile relationship.

Our experience in Iraq offers a valuable lesson for how to proceed in Iran. Since we overthrew Saddam, we have learned that we invaded an imaginary country, because we relied at the time on information that was out of date and on longtime exiles who exaggerated the good condition of Iraq's infrastructure, the strength of its middle class, and the secular nature of its society. We would have received better information if we had had our own ambassador in Baghdad. Before we put boots on the ground elsewhere, we had better have wingtips there first.

Many Iranians are well disposed toward us. On 9/11, there was dancing in the streets in parts of the Muslim world but candlelit vigils and mourning in Tehran. When we invaded Afghanistan, Iran helped us, especially in our dealings with the Northern Alliance. Hoping for better bilateral relations, Tehran wanted to join us against al Qaeda. The CIA and the State Department supported this partnership, but some in the White House and the Pentagon did not. After President Bush included Iran in the "axis of evil," everything went downhill fast.

Whereas there can be no rational dealings with al Qaeda, Iran is a nation-state seeking regional clout and playing the game of power politics we understand and can skillfully pursue. We cannot live with al Qaeda, but we might be able to live with a contained Iran. Iran will not acquire nuclear weapons on my watch. But before I look parents in the eye to explain why I put their son's or daughter's life at risk, I want to do everything possible to avoid conflict. We have substantive issues to discuss with Tehran. Recent direct negotiations about Iraq have not been productive because they have not explored the full range of issues. We have valuable incentives to offer Iran: trade and economic assistance, full diplomatic relations, and security guarantees.

## TOUGH LOVE FOR PAKISTAN

Whereas our failure to tackle Iran seems to be leading inexorably to our attacking it, our failure to tackle al Qaeda in Pakistan seems to be leading inexorably to its attacking us again.

When we let bin Laden escape at Tora Bora, a region along the Afghan-Pakistani border, in December 2001, we played Brer Fox to his Brer Rabbit. We threw him into the perfect briar patch, under the direct protection of tribal leaders who do not consider their land part of Pakistan and under the indirect protection of the Pakistani government, which believes that it is. On September 12, 2001, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf agreed to sever his relationship with the Taliban and let us fight al Qaeda inside Pakistan. But distracted by Iraq, we have since allowed him to go back on his word.

Despite the Bush administration's continued claims that the U.S. military will pursue "actionable targets," according to a July 2007 article in The New York Times based on interviews with a dozen current and former military and defense officials, a classified raid targeting bin Laden's top deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in Pakistan was aborted in early 2005. Then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called off the attack at the very last minute, as Navy Seals in parachutes were preparing in C-130s in Afghanistan, because he felt he needed Musharraf's permission to proceed. Why did Rumsfeld, instead of President Bush, call off the attack? Did he ask for Musharraf's permission or assume he would not get it? When I am president, I will make the final call on such actions.

This missed opportunity was especially costly because in September 2006 Musharraf agreed to a cease-fire with frontier tribal leaders (which lasted until last July), allowing al Qaeda and the Taliban to gain strength and

operate more easily and freely. With that, Pakistan's halfhearted efforts against the terrorists in the region bordering Afghanistan stopped altogether.

Iraq may be the hot war, but Pakistan is where the cold, calculating planning is going on. If al Qaeda strikes us tomorrow, the attack will be postmarked "Pakistan." And the American people, not understanding why a supposed U.S. ally refused to help and our government put up with it, will justifiably be outraged that bin Laden and his top people got away. In fact, we almost did suffer that next attack: the plot to blow up ten airliners over the Atlantic that the British government foiled in 2006 was hatched in Pakistan, as was an attack against U.S. targets in Germany that was planned to coincide with the sixth anniversary of 9/11.

Rather than wait for the next strike, I prefer to cut to the chase by going after al Qaeda's safe havens in Pakistan. As commander in chief, the U.S. president must balance threats and risks in calculating how best to protect the American people. We are living on borrowed time. The threat of an attack on us is far graver than the risk that a quick and limited strike against al Qaeda would bring extremists to power in Pakistan.

To be sure, Pakistan is an inherently unstable country that has never had a constitutional change of government in its 60 years of existence. It has alternated between military and civilian rule, punctuated by assassinations and coups. Even during times of nominal civilian rule, the army and its affiliated intelligence service, the Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, were the country's most powerful institutions. But in the name of stability, the U.S. government has erred on the side of protecting Musharraf. We have an unfortunate tendency to confuse leaders with their countries and their citizens and to back them for too long, with too few questions asked and too few strings attached. As the Bush administration scrambled to cope with Musharraf's state of emergency last November, it became clear that we had no Pakistan policy, only a Musharraf policy.

Musharraf's top priority is not the United States' survival but his own, physical and political. Musharraf has done his best to convince the Bush administration that the United States' destiny and his are inextricably interwoven -- after him, the deluge. But this is not true. He has not kept extremists from seizing power in Pakistan; they have not seized it simply because they have not had the strength or the support to do so. He claims that he declared the state of emergency because of the threat of extremism to Pakistan. In fact, he was responding to a threat not to the country but to himself and not from extremists but from Pakistan's Supreme Court, which was about to invalidate his recent reelection.

This puts into sharp relief what a waste, what a setback the United States' Pakistan policy has been over the last few years. Al Qaeda and the Taliban have grown stronger; Pakistan's native extremists have expanded east from their frontier strongholds and spread to the cities; the moderate secular parties led by former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif have languished. Musharraf has spent far more energy and enthusiasm sidelining the moderate Pakistani forces we must strengthen than he has going after religious extremists and terrorists. As of this writing, he is arresting the people who share our values and whom we need to empower: leaders and supporters of moderate parties, judges, lawyers, human rights activists, and journalists. He is on a collision course with his own people and with us.

Since 9/11, the United States has given Pakistan about \$10 billion, including some \$5.6 billion to pay for counterterrorism activities against al Qaeda and the Taliban. Less than \$1 billion has gone to projects that directly help the Pakistani people by providing them with schools, food, or medical aid. The lack of schools creates demand for the madrasahs that produce terrorists. We have wasted money on counterterrorism that has not happened and spent precious little on projects to win hearts and minds.

Much of the aid is made up of cash transfers that are not monitored by any U.S. government agency; we must improve transparency and accountability in this area. If we consider cutting aid to Pakistan, we must distinguish among different kinds of funds. We should not cut money for projects that alleviate poverty. Money designated for counterterrorism must be spent for that purpose and with quantifiable results. Money designated for weapons not suited to fighting terrorists should be used as a carrot to reward the Pakistani government for

demonstrated progress in strengthening moderate forces, improving its citizens' quality of life, and fighting terrorism.

It is not enough for Musharraf to appoint a caretaker government, give up his post as army chief, and hold elections in early January, as he has promised: such elections cannot possibly be free and fair with the state of emergency still in effect, opposition politicians and their supporters under arrest, the media censored, assembly forbidden, and the judiciary packed. Opposition party leaders rightly threaten to boycott such sham elections, which would have no legitimacy in the eyes of the Pakistani people. Bhutto and Sharif must be allowed to move freely about the country. Whatever happens in Pakistan next, the country's policy toward the United States is unlikely to change significantly. General Ashfaq Kiyani, the deputy chief of staff of the army and Musharraf's most likely successor, is a moderate who wants the military less involved in politics. As prime minister, Sharif would sound more anti-American, and Bhutto more pro-American. But in any event, our problems with al Qaeda and the Taliban will not be magically solved for us. They are our problems, and we must face up to them.

I will assure the Pakistanis that we are with them for the long haul. When the Russians left Afghanistan in the late 1980s, we quickly lost interest in Pakistan. Many Pakistanis fear the same will happen when al Qaeda and the Taliban are no longer around to keep us engaged. They should not. Pakistan, like Iraq, is a regional problem rather than an isolated one. We must use our friendly ties with India to encourage and help it improve its relationship with Pakistan and to push for increased trade and cooperation between the two countries, all to bring greater stability to the South Asian region.

"The process will not be quick," Ambassador Crocker told Congress of the progress in Iraq last fall. "It will be uneven, punctuated by setbacks as well as achievements, and it will require substantial U.S. resolve and commitment." Does this sound familiar? To me, the statement could also have applied to the American Revolution, the American Civil War, World War I, or World War II. We paid a heavy price in each of those conflicts, but we prevailed. And we will prevail now. Our history, from the snows of Valley Forge to the flames of 9/11, has been one of perseverance. I understand the threats we face today. When I am president, America will look this evil in the eye, confront it, defeat it, and emerge stronger than ever. It is easy to be a peace lover; the challenging part is being a peacemaker.