

“U.S. National Security Policy Post-9/11: Perils and Prospects”

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September 29, 2003

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you, Director Romero, for welcoming me back to Tufts. It's been several years since I last had the privilege to speak here. This time, I come not as a government official, but as a private citizen, scholar and policy analyst. The latter role, I can assure you, has its benefits, especially when the subject is as important and timely as this one. And when one's perspective is not easy to sugar-coat.

I have been asked to address U.S. national security policy in the wake of September 11. Two years later, what perils do we face, what prospects? In short, are we on the right track; and where do we go from here? Let me begin by acknowledging the impossibility of doing this topic justice in one brief speech. So rather than be comprehensive, I will focus on the most salient issues.

Nor will I pretend to be perfectly objective. While I do not view myself as a partisan when it comes to national security affairs, I did serve in the previous Administration. And, as you will see, I do have major policy differences with the current one. However, I think the critique I will present today is anything but partisan. In fact, it reflects what I believe are concerns now shared broadly by a bipartisan cross-section of national security experts as well as by much of the American public.

I. The Big Dig

Are we on the right track? No, I am afraid, quite the opposite.

At the risk of touching a local nerve, I think the state of our national security policy can be summed up in three words: “the big dig”. It is a huge -- and seemingly endless -- mess, of enormous expense. The United States and our national security policy are in a massive hole.

The critical question for this President and the next one (whether George W. Bush or a Democrat) is: how do we climb out?

Allow me first to describe what I believe to be the contours of this hole and then to suggest some strategies for climbing out.

On 9/11, our homeland was attacked in a massive and shocking way, and it became evident to all Americans that we must wage a long-term war on terrorism. In truth, that war was underway well before 9/11. We had already been attacked many times in many places -- New York in 1993, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Yemen to name just a few -- and we had struck back militarily and through other means. What changed on 9/11, apart from our devastating losses, was Americans' understanding of the scale and importance of this war. Our

leaders also gained greater will and ability to commit the resources necessary to fight it most effectively.

Some thing else changed. For a brief and powerful moment, most of the rest of the world genuinely shared our loss. And most were prepared to support us in almost every conceivable way to win the war on terrorism. Needlessly and senselessly, we have squandered that good will. How? In part, by employing bullying rhetoric (“you are either with us or with the terrorists”). Perhaps, by making some unfortunate targeting mistakes in Afghanistan. Certainly, by reinforcing perceptions of American bias in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And most dramatically, by demanding the world fall in line, on our schedule and on the basis of shifting rationales, to oust Saddam Hussein. Or watch us do it all but alone on CNN. While a number of countries continue to cooperate with us, their will to take difficult steps that serve our interests – such as to deploy troops to Iraq -- is diminished, in part due to the high-handed manner in which we have dealt with them at the very time we need them most.

It’s important to recall that President Bush began the war on terrorism well. He rightly pursued a pragmatic and multi-faceted approach, combining the tools of diplomacy, military force, intelligence and law enforcement to go after al Qaeda’s finances and cells around the world. He orchestrated an initially successful military campaign in Afghanistan that ousted the Taliban and disrupted al Qaeda’s operational bases, even if it failed to put al Qaeda out of commission. Finally, the Administration lent valuable military support to governments trying to cool other hot-beds of terrorism from the Phillipines to Yemen.

But two years later, we are devoting our attention, our troops and our resources almost exclusively to Iraq, which the President, if not the Vice President, acknowledges had no known link to the 9/11 attacks. Meanwhile, al Qaeda remains a powerful and aggressive enemy of the U.S., and our friends around the world. It continues to operate not only in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan but also in at least 60 countries worldwide. Over the last year or so, al Qaeda has struck in Casablanca, Kuwait, Amman, Bali, Mombasa, Jakarta, Riyadh, various parts of Pakistan and possibly Baghdad.

Bin Laden and his top deputy appear alive and well and surely are plotting the next devastating attacks against the U.S., perhaps with chemical, biological or radiological weapons. Although the Administration boasts that two thirds of Al-Qaeda’s known leaders have been killed or captured, it simultaneously acknowledges that Al Qaeda sleeper cells abound here in the U.S.

Iraq, where we have 140,000 troops operating in a veritable shooting gallery, has been dubbed by the Administration a “terrorist magnet.” This they portray as a good thing. The theory is, as the President implied in his September 7th speech to the nation, if we can kill al Qaeda on the Iraqi battlefield, then we won’t have to fight them on the home front. Do you buy that logic? How many of you believe that regime change in Iraq has *really* eliminated the possibility of an Al Qaeda attack using WMD here at home?

Two years later, our homeland is not appreciably safer. Indeed, it was unreasonable to suggest that we could dramatically improve homeland security in short order. But, we could

have done more than we have. Valuable time has been wasted, and scarce resources have been channeled to other priorities.

Aviation security has improved, although all baggage is still not screened, and cargo traffic is hardly more secure. Critical infrastructure -- our ports, containers, tankers, chemical and nuclear facilities, truck and rail lines, our power grids -- remain highly vulnerable. No one is pressing the private sector sufficiently to improve cyber-security. First responders across the country -- police, firemen, medical personnel -- lack the equipment and training to save the lives they could, if they had adequate resources. Our public health system is far from coping with a bio-weapons attack. The Department of Homeland Security finally exists, but it will be years before it can effect significant change.

Americans know they aren't more secure. A recent PIPA/Knowledge Network poll showed that 76% of Americans feel less or no more secure than they did just after September 11. What could be a greater priority than enhancing both the real and perceived security of Americans? But many in Washington have long lists of higher priorities.

Abroad, we have fought two major battles in the war on terrorism. Despite declarations of "mission accomplished", both are ongoing. In Afghanistan, the Taliban is resurgent. President Karzai's government is largely a fiction outside of Kabul, and we are poised yet again to abandon Afghanistan prematurely, while security deteriorates and critical nation-building tasks remain undone.

In Iraq, the situation (at least for the U.S.) is worse. We are taking casualties at an alarming rate. Our enemies are targeting any one who wants our mission to succeed -- coalition forces, the UN, moderate Shiite clerics, the Jordanian government, police recruits, the Iraqi Governing Council. Saddam continues to intimidate the populace via audiotape. Meanwhile, we are rapidly losing the battle for Iraqi hearts and minds due to our inability to provide security, electricity, or economic opportunity even as we withhold Iraqis' sovereignty. We have little in the way of concrete plans to grow a democratic Iraq, though we tout its eventual achievement as the model for the rest of the Middle East. Poor planning for the post-war period may cost us the peace, which we can scarcely afford to lose.

And, having failed to secure key nuclear facilities in the immediate aftermath of the war, we also have no idea where Iraq's WMD may be. Did Saddam dismantle his weapons of mass destruction and freeze his programs? If, in fact, he destroyed the WMD, we went to war under false pretexts for no compelling reason. (Surely, we did not intervene to rectify a dismal human rights situation. If so, then why not Sudan, North Korea or Cuba, among others?)

If he kept his WMD, which I long assumed, then where are they now? There are only three plausible explanations: The weapons are buried somewhere in Iraq where they could still be used against U.S. forces by Baathist remnants. Or, they have been transferred to a neighboring state. Or, they have been given to terrorists. None of these scenarios is a good one. Still, we continue to tout our great military victory. Until we resolve the WMD puzzle, U.S. credibility with the rest of the world is a casualty. Until we resolve the WMD puzzle, the fat lady hasn't sung. And victory declarations are premature.

The costs of our Iraq engagement are also staggering. Not just \$87 billion for next fiscal year, but \$79 billion already committed to date. Plus, if we cannot get others to help us pay for reconstruction, the \$20 billion the President requested will prove only a down payment. The American taxpayers will be called upon to pay the approximately \$40 billion balance, which the President still hopes will come from our less than enthusiastic friends. With record deficits exceeding \$500 billion and three million American jobs lost in the last three years, Iraq has become a massive budget buster.

Today, we are bearing 90% of the burden in Iraq – 90% of the troops and 90% of the cost. Contrast that with recent situations where the U.S. has led militarily and others have borne the brunt of the post-conflict burden. Consultation, diplomacy and cooperation with our allies paid dividends in Kosovo, for instance, where the U.S. share of the post-war bill was 15%. Without comparable efforts in Iraq, the American taxpayer is footing the difference.

Indeed, much has changed since we went to war in Kosovo in 1999. Our G-8 partners and others are increasingly wary of U.S. power and intentions. They fear and distrust what they perceive to be the growing U.S. tendency towards unilateral action in world affairs. This fear has been reinforced by the doctrines of preemption and zero tolerance for competitor states, as outlined in President Bush's National Security Strategy. Too many of our traditional partners view their role as to check U.S. power rather than to join with us in advancing our shared interests. Meanwhile, our adversaries are taunting and testing us – from Kim Jong Il to Saddam Hussein to Osama Bin Laden. Fearful friends and emboldened adversaries are far from an optimal combination.

Finally, there are the costs we cannot quantify – the costs of diverting our attention from other, I would argue more urgent, national security priorities. The Middle East Peace Process has broken down for many reasons, but one cannot help but sense active U.S. engagement came too little, too late. For over two years, the U.S. posture was to distance ourselves from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In postponing our involvement until after Iraq, we may have missed a window to advance the peace.

More dangerous still: while we focused like a laser on Iraq, we stood aside as North Korea went fully nuclear. It now likely has the capacity to produce and proliferate several nuclear weapons.

Iran, the world's most active and sophisticated state sponsor of terrorism, seems also to have learned the wrong lesson from Iraq: that is, if you are in the "axis of evil", the only way to deter a U.S. attack is to get yourself some nuclear weapons. And they are on the path to doing so. With half our Army tied down in Iraq, the National Guard and Reserves stretched to the limit, we may not have the capacity to respond effectively, should, God forbid, we face a major military confrontation with another adversary.

This is a rough sketch of the contours of the deep hole I believe we are in.

II. Climbing Out

How to climb out?

While apparently the White House does not yet see it this way, this is the question facing President Bush today. It is also the question that will face whoever is elected in November 2004, whether it is again President Bush or a Democrat. U.S. national security depends squarely on whether our leaders will ask this question plainly and are able to answer it effectively.

Merely the short term challenges we face are complex and simultaneous: to increase Americans' security in the wake of an unrelenting terrorist threat; to repair the damage with our international partners in order to regain their fullest support in combating terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; and to succeed in Iraq.

Meeting these challenges will be difficult and costly, no less so because some of the problems we face, arguably, are of our own making. It is not too late to change course, but we will live with the consequences of our failures for a long time to come. When you are in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging – the sooner the better.

A New U.S. Leadership For All

First and foremost, to climb out, I believe, the U.S. has to exercise an entirely new type of leadership. We are the world's most powerful and wealthy nation. Yet, we cannot assure our own security or maintain our prosperity without the acquiescence, indeed the cooperation, of others.

We need other countries, their citizens and businesses, to trade with, to finance our debts, to maintain the dollar as the world's premier currency. We also need others to help us to find and destroy terrorists' cells and secret bank accounts. We need others to stop weapons proliferation, to fight infectious diseases, to curb organized crime and drug trafficking, to halt global warming, to prevent and resolve regional conflicts, to keep the peace and rebuild failed states. We have neither the ability nor the resources to tackle these challenges alone. The threats the United States now faces are increasingly transnational in nature. Our responses to those threats, if they are to be effective, must equally be multinational.

Thus, the U.S. must lead as if we understand that leadership doesn't exist in a vacuum. By definition, leaders must have others to lead and join with. If others are to join with us, they must see our leadership as serving not just our own interests, but theirs as well. This is common sense, but it is also a far cry from the way we currently act.

Today, we face an international community increasingly skeptical of U.S. intentions and resentful of our power. How did we get here? We started before Iraq, in large part by almost reflexively spurning collective instruments, especially the ABM Treaty, Kyoto, the Bioweapons Convention and the International Criminal Court. Further, we convey a belief that the U.S. stands above international law. We seek exclusive immunities for U.S. soldiers serving in military operations abroad, and we justify unilateral U.S. military actions through a far-reaching doctrine of pre-emption, while warning others not to follow suit.

Iraq was the icing on the cake. While, we had a good case that we were enforcing a decade of UN Security Council resolutions, we squandered that rationale by prematurely halting inspections and refusing to wait even a few weeks to achieve far broader international support. Instead, we demonstrated U.S. willingness to use its vast power for what most of the world viewed as unnecessary, if not illegitimate, purposes.

Moreover, we have managed to aggravate, even alienate, large swaths of the globe by our perceived inattention to their concerns. The countries of Latin America, promised by this President more active engagement than ever before, feel betrayed. Mexico's President invested a great deal of political capital in improved relations with the U.S. in exchange for the lost promise of immigration and other reforms. New free trade agreements for the Americas have not materialized. Instead, we have met the region's political and financial crises with studied ambivalence.

Africa, a region I know well, has lent strong political support to the war on terrorism. Still, many African people and leaders feel largely neglected by this Administration, despite President Bush's recent trip. American marines float off the shores of Liberia, the one country in Africa to which we have unique historical ties, while hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians continue to suffer enormously. President Bush pledged meaningful U.S. support for West African peacekeepers, but instead delivered only 150 soldiers at the Monrovia airport for eleven days. In contrast, Britain intervened three years ago to end decisively the war in neighboring Sierra Leone. France recently deployed troops to Cote D'Ivoire and Congo.

The U.S. again missed a golden opportunity in Liberia not only to save lives and to help stabilize a strategically significant region. We also lost a timely chance to demonstrate that the U.S. is prepared (even if only occasionally, on a limited basis, and in a low risk circumstance) to use our military power not just when we are directly threatened but also when we can enhance the security of others.

As a consequence of such behavior, we appear to many a hegemon out for itself, rather than a global leader for common good. This perception undermines the moral strength of our leadership, or "soft power", and weakens international support for our legitimate objectives.

This is why we must urgently change the tone and substance of America's international leadership. We must lead not only for ourselves, which goes without saying, but wherever and whenever we can, we must also lead for the greater global good. In doing so, we will advance our own economic and security interests, which in a globalizing world we cannot accomplish alone. Crucially, we will also motivate others to join with us rather than resent us, cower from us, or seek to counter-balance us.

What would new American leadership entail?

First, we would care and be seen to care about what others think. We would not dictate, but listen. We would consult and, yes, even on occasion take the advice of others -- at least on how to do things, if not as often on what to do. We would seek to build consensus for our

objectives at the outset rather than merely call for international clean-up crews after the mess is made. Today, many senior U.S. officials treat diplomacy like a blow-up doll – to be used or discarded as convenient. Instead, we need to restore diplomacy to a leading place in our international arsenal.

Second, we need to make collective instruments and institutions work for us rather than weaken or destroy them. The rest of the world cares deeply about international treaties and bodies. We should too, since many (like the UN and NATO) we ourselves created. Moreover, these institutions often, if not always, prove useful and necessary vehicles. To employ a cliché, we should “mend not end” problematic treaties such as the ICC, Kyoto and the Chemical and Biological weapons conventions. We should maintain our political and practical investment in NATO rather than dismiss it, as we did when our allies invoked the collective defense clause to assist us after September 11. If the UN is to be there when we need it, as so often we do, we need to nurture and strengthen it even when we don’t need it. UN Secretary General Annan has just called for a radical re-examination of the mission and structure of the UN. The U.S. should play as constructive a role in this effort as we did more than fifty years ago when we gave birth to the world body in San Francisco.

Third, we need to lead as if we fully understand that the U.S. has a critical stake in enhancing the security, health, freedom and economic well-being of others around the world. As President Bush has said, our security and prosperity are threatened in a world where half the world’s population lives on less than \$2 per day. This is no doubt the case, when you consider the transnational nature of the threats we face.

As long as we continue to be perceived as miserly (which comparatively we are), hypocritical, protectionist or arrogant in many parts of the world, we will fail to sustain the partnerships that are so critical to combating the transnational threats we face. We will also give rise to a new generation of young people steeped in anti-American sentiment, distrustful of our intentions, and buoyed when we fail.

We need leadership guided by enlightened self-interest -- the understanding that we win when others win. And we lose when others lose. It is we who lose when educated young Muslim men turn to radicalism after losing hope for a good job or a bright future. It is we lose when failed states like Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan cannot keep terrorists out of their territories, even if they want to. We lose when Saudi citizens feel repressed by a corrupt regime that we support. We lose when poor governance and weak healthcare infrastructure in southern China allows SARS to spread for months undetected. We lose when African villagers chop down forests of trees for firewood for lack of alternative fuels.

New American leadership would aim to maximize global public goods – global peace and stability, global economic opportunity and growth, public health, democracy and respect for human rights. In turn, we would enhance our own security and secure our own leadership.

Take just one aspect of our security: winning the long-term war on terrorism. For this we need a strategy that entails not just military action, not just law enforcement and intelligence operations. We also need a strategy for easing the privations and frustrations that make many

parts of the world from Africa to South America's Tri-border region, from Chechnya and South Asia to Indonesia and the Philippines, fertile grounds for terrorist operators and recruiters.

The war for hearts and minds will not be won – in Iraq or anywhere else – on the basis of Hollywood style public diplomacy. We need to show we genuinely care for those beyond our borders. From Mexico, to Ethiopia to Kandahar, we need to be seen as interested in, sympathetic to, and generous in addressing the critical needs of the world's poor and disaffected. This may seem, even in Massachusetts, like extreme wooly, liberal humanitarianism. But let me assure you, I'm talking about our hard-core national security interests.

As a practical matter, the U.S. should view it as our fight, not just the developing world's, to close the gaps between rich and poor. It must be our fight, not just the developing world's, to educate the uneducated (especially girls), to train and to employ jobless youth, to prevent and treat infectious diseases (especially HIV/AIDS and malaria), to open our markets fully to goods and services from the developing world, and to end agricultural subsidies which deprive poor farmers of their best route out of poverty. The U.S. ought to lead our G-8 partners in a comprehensive, long-term commitment to foster global growth and freedom through substantially increasing aid, through free trade, investment in micro- as well as global enterprises and debt relief, while fighting corruption and strengthening democratic institutions.

The Administration, to its credit, has made promises that represent a start down this path. The President's proposed Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), if fully funded (which now seems unlikely), would represent a 50% increase in U.S. development assistance starting in 2006. However, under current plans, roughly only a dozen, high-performing countries would benefit initially. Most of the world's most populous, needy and important developing countries would be left out. This outcome does not negate the need for increased foreign assistance. It does call into question the wisdom of investing it all in an interesting development experiment that is unlikely to yield long-term benefits where they are needed most.

Similarly, I welcome the President's proposal to increase U.S. global spending on HIV/AIDS by \$10 billion to \$15 billion over five years. This investment, which should even be greater, represents a belated but crucial recognition that we must demonstrate care for the concerns of others. Unfortunately, these funds, if appropriated, will be back-loaded – delaying unnecessarily our response to a disease that has already killed over 20 million and infects more than 6,000 new victims every day. In four months in Iraq, we will spend a billion more on just our military operations than we will in five years to fight HIV/AIDS. This prioritization will not be lost either on leaders or ordinary citizens in many parts of the world.

To win the war on terrorism, we must also recognize that failed states pose a direct threat to U.S. national security. Failed states are countries in which the central government does not exert effective control over, nor deliver vital services to, significant parts of its territory due to conflict, ineffective governance, or state collapse. Few Americans would have thought that events in Afghanistan could affect us so directly. Yet, as we all learned after September 11, failed states serve as safe-havens and staging grounds for terrorists. They can also afford them easy access to diamonds, uranium, or narcotics that help finance illicit activities. Terrorist organizations take advantage of failed states' porous borders and their weak law enforcement

and security institutions to move men, weapons and money. Terrorists may also recruit foot soldiers from their poor, disillusioned populations.

Thus, if we are serious about fighting terrorism, whether we like it or not, the U.S. must become more rather than less engaged in the difficult and, sometimes thankless, tasks of peacemaking, peacekeeping and nation-building in failed states. We must do so not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in such places as Liberia and Congo. We can no longer afford to view any part of the world as unimportant to U.S. national security interests. Our battlefield is the globe, and we must adapt our strategies and tactics accordingly.

Back to Basics in the War on Terrorism

I have described at some length potential long-term strategies.

The next major step in climbing out of the big hole we are in is to re-cast our short-term approach to the war on terrorism. We need to get back to basics. Today, we are consumed by a secondary issue: Iraq. Like it or not, we must see this job through. At the same time, we need to devote far greater effort and attention to the global fight against al Qaeda and other “terrorists with global reach”.

Job One now is homeland security. We must speed our efforts to harden critical infrastructure, equip and train first responders, and improve bio-preparedness. The President and Congress cannot achieve vital improvements on the cheap. State and local governments desperately need increased federal assistance.

Our leaders also need to level with the American people about our continued vulnerability and call upon us to sacrifice -- not our liberties but, perhaps, some degree of our luxury -- to enhance our common security. Today, we are asking only our servicemen and women and the next generation, whose future we are mortgaging, to sacrifice for the war on terrorism. While we spend billions in Iraq, we short change homeland security. And the richest Americans continue to bank tax cuts they hardly need. Our President should redress this imbalance. I know of few, if any, beneficiaries of the President’s tax cuts who wouldn’t trade them readily for better homeland security or for smaller deficits.

Next, we need to finish the job in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al Qaeda, and bin Laden, presumably, continue to operate in the common border region. We have largely abandoned the military fight in this arena – which seems neither wise nor sustainable. In conjunction with Pakistani and Afghan authorities as well as NATO forces in Kabul, we should renew aggressive efforts to hunt down and eliminate al Qaeda and Taliban remnants.

Third, we must stop soft-peddling the Saudi Arabia problem. There are suggestions that Saudi authorities are now taking counter-terrorism cooperation more seriously in the wake of the Riyadh bombings. If not, we should spare no effort to press them. At the same time, we need to conduct tough, private conversations with royal leaders about instituting democratic reform. They don’t want it, and we are scared of it. But without such reforms, both the Saudi leadership and we are sitting on a ticking time bomb.

Fourth, we need to continue to strengthen and expand intelligence-sharing and law enforcement cooperation with countries that can help us wrap up al Qaeda operatives, cells and finances. Such efforts are crucial to thwarting potential attacks, and are well advanced. They are limited only by some governments' capacity to cooperate and by others' reluctance to appear too close to the U.S. Where the problem is capacity, the U.S. can provide weak states with substantial counter-terrorism assistance to help strengthen their immigration controls, customs regimes, and airport security. The Administration has announced an \$100 million program to assist vulnerable East African nations. This good initiative should be increased and expanded to other regions of Africa and beyond. Where the problem is will, we can begin to address the problem through the new sort of U.S. leadership I have already described.

Last but by no means least, getting back to basics on terrorism must entail invigorated efforts to prevent terrorists from obtaining weapons of mass destruction. At the core of this should be renewed and expanded support for the Nunn-Lugar program, a post-Cold War initiative aimed at securing WMD facilities in the former Soviet Union and deterring former Soviet scientists from selling their knowledge. These former Soviet assets remain a risk to us and to others. We now face a similar problem in Iraq. To limit Iraq's continued potential to proliferate, we should invite back UN inspectors, give them full support, and apply the Nunn-Lugar strategy to Iraqi scientists.

North Korea and Iran

We must also tackle the imminent and major threats posed by the world's most serious potential nuclear proliferators: North Korea and Iran. Iraq had no nuclear weapons. Yet, while we acted as if it did, North Korea, we believe, has produced enough enriched uranium to make at least six nuclear weapons. Impoverished and irrational, North Korea has every economic incentive to sell such weapons to the highest bidder. With 30,000 U.S. troops and the population of Seoul in proximate danger as well as Japan and the Western U.S. well within range of North Korean missiles, this is a problem we can ill-afford to discount.

Yet, that is what we have done. First, we down-played the threat in the run-up to Iraq. Then, we refused bilateral talks, which we stubbornly equated with blackmail. As a result, we effectively acquiesced in the resumption of North Korea's nuclear program. Precious months were lost as uranium enrichment progressed. Finally, we have persuaded China, Russia, Japan and South Korea to join us in our preferred multilateral format for talks. Yet, we still refuse to negotiate with North Korea -- that is to engage in the process of give and take. Instead, having let the nuclear cow out of the barn, we are resorting to preventing North Korean proliferation through the Proliferation Security Initiative. Under this plan, we will attempt to interdict at sea vessels containing nuclear contraband, presumably using intelligence more accurate than that which was available to us on Iraq.

Our only real hope -- and, according to experts, it may be too late -- is to negotiate in earnest with North Korea, bilaterally, if necessary. We will need to trade at least offers of assistance and a non-aggression pact for a verifiable halt to the North's nuclear programs.

Unpalatable as such a deal may be, it may be the only way to prevent a nuclear North Korea from threatening us and our allies or selling WMD to terrorists.

Iran too has flouted the IAEA and seems poised to develop a nuclear weapons capacity. Of all the threats we face, this may be the most serious, because Iran has actively supported anti-U.S. terrorism and maintains close ties to Hezbollah, Hamas and increasingly, it seems, to al Qaeda. Iran's leadership is divided, as are our allies from us over how to treat Iran. The Russians refuse to back away from their contract to help Iran build a nuclear reactor. The Europeans, while increasingly concerned, are reluctant to threaten economic sanctions due to their strong trade ties.

Just last week, Iran's Foreign Minister offered to allow the IAEA to conduct the most rigorous and intrusive form of inspections to verify that Iran's enrichment program is for civilian purposes. In exchange, he said, the U.S. must not prevent Iran from proceeding with a civilian nuclear program. This type of bargain is half a loaf. A non-nuclear Iran should be our goal, but we should explore this offer seriously along with our European partners and weigh it against the alternatives, few of which appear more attractive. We should also explore the potential for renewed engagement to improve bilateral relations with Iran, even as we maintain a credible military option in the face of both Iran and North Korea.

Refusing to Fail in the Middle East

Maintaining such a military option requires achieving the swiftest possible success in Iraq, where our Army is at present over-committed, and our objectives are unrealistic. Realistically, it is time to re-define success – to something short of the establishment in Iraq of a beacon of secular democracy to light the path for all the Middle East.

What do we minimally need? A whole and stable Iraq free of Baathist leadership and massive human rights violations. We need an Iraq verifiably rid of WMD, with a functioning, broadly representative government able to provide basic security and services to its people and that poses no threat to its neighbors. Ideally, this government will be friendly to the U.S.

We need to leave Iraq as soon as reasonably possible, but on our own schedule, having achieved our minimum objectives. We cannot cut and run nor appear to be driven out by terror tactics. These should be our bottom lines.

In the meantime, we need to set forth a realistic yet aggressive timeline for transferring sovereignty to Iraqis, to offer them a horizon and assuage fears that our occupation is indefinite. We need to get a grip on security – ideally by involving other countries' troops in much larger numbers but, if necessary, by beefing up the complement of U.S. forces. Drawing lessons from elsewhere and expertise from skilled NGOs, we should give urgent attention to building over the long term, durable democratic institutions from the ground up.

At the same time, we need to be willing to compromise substantially and share real responsibility for governance with the UN and Iraqis. This is not only the price we have to pay, at this late stage, for meaningful contributions of troops and dollars. It is also what we should do

to maximize our chances of success. The UN knows a lot more than the Defense Department about nation-building, and Iraqis know a lot more than we about their fractious and complex society. In sharing responsibility for governing, we would also share the responsibility for failure, should it come. And we would take the U.S. and our troops at least partially out of the political and military bull's eye in which we now find ourselves.

Just as we must refuse to fail in Iraq, so too must we refuse to give up on, or take another holiday from, the Middle East Peace Process. Continued and escalating conflict between Israelis and Palestinians poses several threats we cannot ignore. First, it costs our friend Israel scores of innocent civilians each year through vicious terrorist attacks. Second, hundreds of Palestinians, mainly innocents, are killed by Israelis each year. Third, the occupation deprives Palestinians of liberty, hope, and economic opportunity. This deprivation is unsustainable and poses an enduring risk to Israel and to the U.S. because it fuels wave after wave of suicide bombers. Fourth, this festering sore serves as a potent rallying cry not just for Arabs and Muslims but for much of the world's dispossessed and disaffected. The United States' perceived imbalance makes us a target for the anger this conflict engenders far beyond the Palestinian territories.

For all of these reasons and others, we need peace in the Middle East. The "road map" has foundered on the familiar shores of Palestinian terror, Israeli retaliation and American half measures. The U.S. warmly welcomed former Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas but did little concretely to strengthen his hand. We promised to pressure both sides to fulfill their obligations – to dismantle terrorist infrastructure, roll-back settlements, etc. – but when the going got tough and the parties got going, the U.S. let both sides out of the noose. Now, while Israel's wall goes up, we remain paralyzed. Except for wishing Arafat away, we have no practical plan for progress. As politically difficult as this problem is, we need our President to expend the capital, force the compromises and twist the arms of regional leaders to wrest peace from the jaws of catastrophe. This President is well-positioned to accomplish this goal, provided he continues seriously to try.

III. Conclusion

Let me conclude by summarizing: the hole we are in is deep, its wall steep. Yet we must climb out. Our President can and should begin this process now. Further delay will cost us all dearly. The way out entails urgent and dramatic resort to the humble leadership President Bush promised in his campaign.

We can begin by taking affirmative steps to allay international concern about what many perceive to be our brazen exercise of American power for selfish and dubious objectives. We need to demonstrate that our stewardship of the globe as the world's remaining superpower will aim to benefit others as well as ourselves, that we seek power not just for its own sake but to enhance the security, liberty and prosperity of our own and other peoples.

We can also prove a consistent preference for cooperation and consultation with our international partners over knee-jerk unilateralism. We can build up regional and international institutions rather than sideline or undermine them. We can jettison the convenient fiction that it is often us against the United Nations, ignoring the fact that for over fifty years we have been the

UN's most influential member and that the UN's failings are therefore U.S. failings. We can find ways to commit to, or if not, to modify international treaties and instruments rather than merely toss them aside and walk away. In short, we can change the tone and substance of our international engagement as a first and relatively easy step in repairing battered relationships.

At this especially dangerous moment in history, the U.S. must exhibit strong, steady, principled leadership in pursuit of our national security objectives. We should recognize our limitations and prioritize the threats we face. We should seek to strengthen our international partnerships with countries large and small through collaborative leadership and compassionate policies. We should show our adversaries and allies alike both our determination to defend our interests and our patient resolve.

We almost certainly face tough and deadly battles ahead, but we can fight them with greater strength, more committed partners and perhaps even shorten their duration, if we have the vision to adjust our strategies, tactics and tone. The U.S. and its leaders must take the long view, recognizing that to preserve our power and defend our interests most effectively, we need to lead more justly, openly and generously. We are more than capable of doing so, if only we have the wisdom and the will to change.

Thank you.