

After three years of occupation of Iraq, the United States and the world community are no safer -- terrorist attacks are up, American troops are daily targets in a messy occupation, and real weapons of mass destruction have spread throughout the world. I believe that there is a better way to ensure national security. Congress must reject the Bush Administration's militarized unilateralism, which has alienated America's traditional allies and has sunk us into a long-term engagement in Iraq.

The United States must build a broad and strong coalition in the fight against terrorism, increase human intelligence efforts and shift a greater share of resources into development programs in poor countries to ameliorate the root causes of terrorism. The costs of the war in Iraq have been horrific with regard to lives lost, resources wasted, and credibility squandered. Iraq today is unstable and hostile to U.S. and coalition forces that have fought for Iraq's liberation and democracy. However, Iraq is not overwhelmed by foreign terrorists; instead, it is overwhelmed by Iraqis fighting Iraqis in what could be a long, drawn out civil war. Foreign terrorists account for less than seven percent of the 'insurgency' in Iraq. Once the Iraqi people are no longer distracted by the perception of a United States military occupation, they will concentrate their efforts on unifying their country and ridding their homeland of all foreign fighters. Continuing to "stay the course" will only prolong an intractable occupation that has cost thousands of lives and brought more anger and hatred towards the United States.

The war has actually heightened the threat of terrorism. In fact, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) claims that the American invasion and occupation of Iraq helped fuel the global jihad movement and that Islamic radicalism has spread since September 11, 2001. This report makes it abundantly clear that the lack of planning, the mismanagement, and the complete incompetence of our leadership has done the most damage to our security. It's clear we need a new direction for U.S. national security policy; more ideological jargon is not going to solve the quagmire in Iraq.

Instead of staying the course, the Administration should rethink its current policies and strive to prevent terrorism and other deadly conflicts without relying solely on military force. It is clear that the Administration must seek different approaches to terrorism, homeland security, and engagement abroad to keep our nation safe.

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