Iraq and Beyond
Clarifying the Debate on Foreign Policy

The Online Kit Includes:

NONPARTISAN ISSUE GUIDES
The Economy  Climate Change
Immigration  Iraq & Beyond
Taxes, Spending & Debt  Health Care

RESOURCE LINKS

DISCUSSION BOARDS

 POLLING PLACE INFORMATION

Get the facts on issues that matter most from the Webby Award nominated site PublicAgenda.org
This year, you’ll hear nearly every candidate running for any kind of national office – president, senator or representative – talk about foreign policy and keeping the United States secure. They’ll comment on how important the issue is and how vital it is to protect the nation from terrorism and compete in the global economy. Some of them will offer specific ideas for dealing with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, homeland security, and protecting American jobs.

What they say will probably sound pretty good – they are politicians after all – but here’s a little backgrounder that can help you think through just how much to trust what they have to say and to help you evaluate which one is most likely to tackle this problem in ways you think will work.

Here’s what we have for you:

The Fix We’re in Now
The basic facts – the very least you need to know to get a grasp on this issue

So What’s the Plan?
Three different directions the country could go in, complete with important pros and cons for you to think about (and argue with someone else about if you like)

Quotes to Consider
Americans don’t agree on much these days – certainly not how to fix the health care system. Here are what some influential Americans have to say on the topic – quick and to the point

Starting Statistics
(and Ones You Need to Know)
You can let the numbers do the talking with our quick set of charts and graphs that will help you understand a lot more about what’s at stake, what’s possible and what’s pie in the sky

“Americans who travel abroad for the first time are often shocked to discover that, despite all the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, many foreign people still speak in foreign languages.”

— Dave Barry, humorist
Surveys this year find only about one-quarter of Americans believe that things are on the right track when it comes to the country’s relations with the rest of the world. Nearly three-quarters believe the world has become a much more dangerous place for the U.S. and its people. The United States has not had a major terrorist attack on its shores since September 11, but many Americans remain highly concerned. While much of the public’s concern understandably revolves around terrorism and lives lost in Iraq, other issues cause concern too. Here are some details to think over:

- Iraq remains a costly, controversial war. According to government estimates, the U.S. has spent about $640 billion on fighting terrorism since September 11 with most of the money going to the war in Iraq. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that there is progress in Iraq; violence against civilians and U.S. troops is down as of summer 2008. Nonetheless, it “remains volatile and dangerous.” The U.S. is now spending about $11 billion a month there.

- The U.S. has about 140,000 troops in Iraq and another 23,500 in Afghanistan, and the combined operations have strained the U.S. military. In 2008, U.S. Army General Richard Cody testified before Congress that “the current demand for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the sustainable supply and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies.” To meet the demands of fighting the two wars, the military has repeatedly extended tours of duty for active personnel and called on members of the reserve to serve abroad.

- Very few mourn Saddam Hussein, but Americans differ on whether Iraq actually posed a serious threat under his leadership. No meaningful evidence of weapons of mass destruction was ever found in Iraq, nor was Hussein implicated in the attacks of September 11. However, he was a brutal and dangerous leader, and military officials do report that al Qaeda groups are fighting in Iraq now.

- Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda leader behind 9/11, remains at large. Most experts believe he is hiding in the mountainous region between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but they are divided over the degree to which bin Laden still plans and directs terrorist activity. Some believe al Qaeda is now mainly made up of small groups inspired by bin Laden that plot their own attacks. Counter-terrorism experts worry a lot about these independent groups who are difficult to spot, and it’s hard to tell whether they’re serious or just blowhards.

- The U.S., fighting with NATO allies, ousted the Taliban from Afghanistan in 2001, and a more moderate government took over there. But the Pentagon reports that the Taliban is now a “resilient insurgency” in Afghanistan and that security is “fragile.” In May and June 2008, more coalition troops died in Afghanistan than in Iraq.

- There is mixed progress in the effort to control the spread of nuclear weapons. Iran is suspected of trying to develop them, although it says it is only working on a peaceful nuclear power program. Iran has not complied with U.N. resolutions to stop enriching uranium, and has threatened retaliation against Israel and U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf if its nuclear facilities are attacked. North Korea has agreed to provide details on its nuclear program and shut down reactors in return for aid and removal from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. One major dilemma for U.S. foreign policy is the degree to which negotiating with so-called “rogue” nations like Iran and North Korea is helpful or whether tougher actions are needed.

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“You can always count on Americans to do the right thing... after they’ve tried everything else.”
— Winston Churchill
The bloody and bitter dispute between Israel and the Palestinians has led to repeated wars and civilian deaths on all sides, but no settlement is in sight. These hostilities, which have lasted for more than 50 years, are considered to be a major cause of Arab and Muslim resentment of the U.S.

In the past, foreign policy revolved mainly around peace and war, diplomacy, and keeping the U.S. safe from attack. But now there are many other issues that are, in fact, foreign policy issues. These include climate change, energy, trade and jobs, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, the spread of diseases like avian flu, and food safety issues. Whether Americans are safe from these dangers and problems depends, in many respects, on whether other countries cooperate with us. Most Americans see energy as the most pressing of these issues – which is no surprise, given what's happened with gas prices this year. Over half say they “worry a lot” that “problems abroad” could hurt our energy supply and/or drive up costs. Since the U.S. imports about half of its oil – and since nearly every vehicle in the country runs on some form of it – there is plenty to worry about. Some of our major suppliers of oil, like Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria, are either in unstable regions, have internal problems that could cut off supplies, or have governments that are hostile to us. In the past, oil-producing countries have embargoed shipments to the U.S. because of political disputes.

Climate change, or global warming, is another problem that can’t be solved without international cooperation. Most world leaders accept that global warming is real, but the problem is how tough to be in addressing it. Environmentalists say we need to set worldwide mandatory targets for reducing greenhouse gases, but the U.S. government has balked at this because of concerns about how fair these agreements are and what their impact will be on the U.S. economy. The U.S. and Europe are responsible for most of the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere, but countries like China and India are becoming major world polluters and their economies are growing fast.


Where American troops are stationed
Active duty U.S. military personnel by region, March 2008

Note: Active duty military personnel totaled 1.4 million worldwide as of March 31, 2008.

For the past five years, the questions about the Iraq war – was it the right decision? Are we winning? How long will it take? – have dominated foreign policy and the public’s attention. And the Iraq war is still going on, with 140,000 American troops engaged. But it is only one of the many challenges facing the United States worldwide.

This year, the world’s problems continue to push in on the United States, even on issues that most people would consider “domestic.” The high price of energy is closely linked to the use of foreign oil, and the United States depends on unstable parts of the world to get it. The mortgage crisis and credit crunch at home are spreading to markets worldwide. The war in Afghanistan continues, and may, in fact, be getting more difficult to win. And Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorist network still exist and still pose a potential threat.

Sometimes, election campaigns get caught up in roaring debates and dueling attack ads over which candidate is stronger or more patriotic or which one did or did not slip up when quizzed on a foreign policy factoid. Obviously, nobody wants weak, unpatriotic dummies in Congress or the White House making decisions about the country’s international affairs. But sometimes these campaign scuffles (and the media’s obsession with them) get in the way of talking about issues and ideas that are critical to the country’s future.

Whether we like it or not, the United States is the world’s only superpower, with the largest military and the biggest economy on the planet. In fact, our economy is four times as big as second-ranked China, and we spend roughly ten times what they do on the armed forces. Much of the world watches Hollywood movies, surfs an English-language Internet on Windows computers and eats at American fast-food franchises. In many ways, no one can touch us; in other ways, everybody wants a piece of us. Unfortunately, a lot of people around the world either blame us for what goes wrong or expect us to fix it pronto. Being the world’s only superpower actually isn’t as much fun as it sounds.

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For one thing, despite American wealth and power, the world is not a place where the United States says “jump” and everyone else asks “how high?” The events of 2008 show that clearly enough.

We can’t just tell the Iranians to stop their nuclear research; we can’t order Saudi Arabia and Venezuela to pump more oil; and we can’t lock Israeli and Palestinian leaders in a room until they settle their differences. The modern economy is global – we buy and sell all over the world, and so does everyone else. Countries like China and India are growing rapidly, challenging the U.S. in world markets, and they are strong enough to push back against U.S. policies they don’t like. The European Union is much more powerful economically than any of its individual countries, and their currency, the euro, is an alternative to the dollar for many international businesses.

What makes us secure?

For most Americans, the fundamental question about foreign policy is: what makes the U.S. secure? And what does security mean?

Certainly security means safety from direct violent threats: terrorists and hostile governments. Preventing more countries from getting nuclear weapons is a security issue, too. But security can also mean a lot of other things. It can mean ensuring that Americans have jobs in a global economy, where we’re competing with factories in Indonesia and call centers in India. It can mean ensuring a stable supply of oil and other energy sources. And it can mean dealing with long-term threats like climate change or the spread of disease, and even protecting the safety of the U.S. food supply.

Trade deficit
Balance of U.S. trade in goods and services, in millions, 1960 – 2007

So how do we make ourselves more secure? Which approaches are most likely to produce the results we’re aiming for? Here are a few more questions voters might want to think about (and ask candidates) as they focus on the country’s foreign policy:

Is the U.S. putting too much or too little emphasis on working with other countries?

Sometimes politicians debate whether the U.S. should go it alone or work more with our allies to get things done. In the real world, however, it’s usually not an either-or choice; there aren’t that many international problems the U.S. can solve completely on its own.

Stopping the spread of nuclear weapons – a major goal for both the U.S. government and its allies – is a classic example of this. One of the major foreign policy successes of the past few years is North Korea’s decision to shut down its nuclear weapons program after developing several atomic bombs. Key pressure came from the so-called Six-Party Talks led by the U.S., and the influence of China in particular was important in reaching a deal.

Doing something about Iran’s nuclear program is another matter. Iran says it’s only interested in peaceful uses of nuclear power, but the U.S. and its key allies believe Iran is working on developing nuclear weapons. Iran is already under international sanctions because of the program. Some in the U.S. argue that only force will stop the program, but right now there would be little support for it from our allies. And there’s serious question about whether the already overstretched U.S. military could take on another major conflict. Much of the election debate may focus on whether it’s better to talk directly with Iran or hold off on talks until the Iranians begin to show more evidence of good faith.

Are we striking the right balance between using the military and using diplomacy?

Foreign policy experts often talk about “hard power” and “soft power.” Hard power means military force and economic sanctions, like cutting off trade – basically leaning on another country to get what you want. Soft power means diplomacy, public relations, cultural exchanges and other tactics designed to improve our image abroad and persuade others to go along with us.

Some foreign policy experts say we’ve let soft power go and relied too much on hard power in the last few years. They point to America’s negative image abroad as proof. But most experts insist you need both kinds of power to get anything done, and the question is often about when to emphasize “the carrot” versus when to emphasize “the stick.” Debates over the use of hard versus soft power will almost surely emerge in discussions about what to do regarding Iran, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and to a certain degree, China. China may not be a major military or terrorist threat to the U.S., but it is a powerful economic competitor. There is a lot of debate about what approaches will be most effective in getting China to improve its human rights record and treatment of Tibet, stick to fairer trade and economic policies and curb its greenhouse gas emissions.

International comparison of military spending

Countries with the highest military expenditure, in billions of U.S. dollars, at constant 2005 prices and exchange rates, 2007

Note: “*” denotes estimated figure


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Military Spending ($)billions</th>
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<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Spain</td>
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</table>
HOW WE GOT HERE

Do we have a smart, effective strategy for countering terrorism?

Questions about how the country is using hard versus soft power are critical, but – not to get all Chuck Norris about this – nobody believes that soft power would change Osama bin Laden’s mind, or that of his hard-core al Qaeda operatives. Terrorists themselves have to be arrested or killed. But even in this case, soft power can make hard power more effective. We need the help of other countries to pursue terrorists, and anti-Americanism can make that help harder to get. It could be the difference between a foreign police official jumping on a lead right away, or letting it sit in his inbox for a while. Hatred of the U.S. could make more people turn toward terrorism, or it might just make people more reluctant to help us fight it. One major argument is whether hard-nosed tactics, such as the prison for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, benefit us by forcing information from suspects or hurt us by damaging our human rights record.

Some experts question whether the “war on terror” approach is the right one. Other countries that have long dealt with terrorist movements, particularly in Europe, see chasing terrorists as a police problem, more like cracking the Mafia or drug cartels than fighting another country. Others say that when a government is shielding terrorists, as the Taliban did in Afghanistan, nothing short of military force will work.

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Recipients of U.S. foreign aid
Countries that received the most in economic and military assistance from the U.S., in millions, 2006

HOW WE GOT HERE

“We have defeated Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The good news is Iraq is ours, and the bad news is Iraq is ours.”
— David Letterman

Do we have a sound strategy for Iraq?

All the experts agree the violence in Iraq has dropped substantially this year and that some progress has been made politically. Beyond that, the consensus gets murky.

Take, for example, the 18 benchmarks set by Congress to measure U.S. progress in Iraq. These range from controlling the level of sectarian violence and disarming the various militias operating independently of the Iraqi government, to offering amnesty to insurgents and ensuring a fair distribution of oil revenue among Iraq’s ethnic groups.

But how well the U.S. is doing in Iraq depends on who you ask. The last time top U.S. leaders testified before Congress in April, they said progress was made on 12 of the 18 benchmarks; and by July the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad said all but three benchmarks were met. But the independent Government Accountability Office was more skeptical in a July assessment, saying that progress was made on security and key legislation has been passed, but the overall U.S. strategy needs to be updated. Other groups, ranging from the conservative American Enterprise Institute to the liberal Center for American Progress, have issued their own reports and differ widely on the results.

For most Americans, the question is "when can the troops come home?" Surveys show that majorities of Americans want to withdraw. The Iraqi government itself has said it hopes U.S. troops can withdraw by 2010. But a major question is how well the Iraqi government can handle the infighting between the nation’s three major religious and ethnic groups (Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims and Kurds). The goal of recent U.S. strategy has been to use American troops to control the violence while allowing the Iraqis time to make political accommodations leading to a stable government. If violence increases again – or if a political deal between the three groups fails to take shape – the situation may deteriorate.

Do we have a good strategy for Afghanistan?

Afghanistan, to most Americans, is the war without controversy. The U.S. and its NATO allies invaded Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks to pursue al Qaeda and the Taliban regime that protected it. Since then, U.S. and NATO troops have been supporting the new government there, but the Taliban has recovered some of its former strength in the country. This summer, coalition casualties in Afghanistan have outpaced deaths in Iraq, even though there are far fewer troops there. Pentagon officials warn that some of the troops being pulled out of Iraq may need to be sent to Afghanistan instead. So the next president and Congress will have to make some tough decisions about U.S. troop levels and how much money to spend on the war.

Are we putting the right amount of emphasis on our role in the world as opposed to what we do here at home?

For a lot of Americans, the time and money that elected officials invest in addressing problems abroad seems like attention taken away from problems here at home. But this isn’t an either-or choice. Certainly, money spent on defense or foreign aid could be spent on something else (or not spent at all). But what happens abroad obviously affects us at home. We can’t just take our ball and go home. On the other hand, American activities and involvement abroad have sometimes created more problems than they solve, so just “being involved” in and of itself isn’t enough.

A stable, cooperative world where other countries play by sensible political and economic rules is one where the United States is more likely to thrive. We need other countries to cooperate with us on problems like global warming and international drug trafficking. Wars and other disturbances that don’t seem to have all that much to do with us can cause serious disruptions in our supply of oil and produce waves of refugees and immigrants. So the question of striking the right balance between addressing international problems and taking care of problems at home is a critical one.
SO WHAT’S THE PLAN?

Foreign Policy choices

Choice One: Focus on the home front

The United States can’t solve all of the world’s problems and we shouldn’t try. We’re overstretched and over-committed around the world. We need to worry about problems at home first, including protecting our jobs and homeland security. The best way to keep the U.S. secure is to focus much more on what we can do right here at home and less on trying to fix problems worldwide. We need to play stronger defense: tighten rules on immigration and border security to keep terrorists and criminals out of the country, achieve energy independence so we’re not dependent on foreign oil, and make trade agreements that protect American jobs instead of sending them abroad.

Choice Two: Use persuasion and diplomacy to make us more secure

The United States’ influence is enormous, but in recent years we’ve relied too much on our military to get our way. This aggressive strategy has entangled us in two wars and, as a result, our military is spread way too thin. Even worse, the war in Iraq and our treatment of prisoners in the war on terrorism has hurt our image abroad. But there are lots of other ways we can influence a world, that is already dominated by American products, entertainment and values. We should use these “soft power” tools of economics and culture to build a more secure world.

Choice Three: We live in a dangerous world, and the United States is the only nation with the clout to provide international leadership and ensure global stability

The threat of terrorism means we’re not at risk just from hostile countries but also from fanatical groups. In addition, civil wars, ethnic violence and a host of deteriorating political situations could spiral out of control, engulfing our allies and threatening our interests. We’re the world’s military and economic superpower and we need to use our power to promote stability and prevent chaos worldwide. Sometimes, but not always, that’s going to mean using military force to protect our interests. And sometimes, but not always, that’s going to mean acting alone to solve problems the world is unwilling to face.
CHOICE ONE:
FOCUS ON THE HOME FRONT

Focus on the home front

What should be done?

- Scale back overseas commitments and make domestic needs our main concern.
- Get out of Iraq and Afghanistan as soon as we can. Do only what is necessary militarily to prevent attacks on the U.S., prevent nuclear proliferation, deter terrorism and deal with direct threats to U.S. interests.
- Tighten border security to keep criminals and terrorists out of the country.
- Stop trying to remake other countries into democracies. It's enough as long as countries are peaceful and not hostile to us.
- Increase domestic oil production and cut down on consumption so we can be energy independent.
- Set a good example as a strong, fair, effective and humane democracy. That will be more effective in spreading democracy than trying to make other countries do things the way we do.

Arguments against this approach:

- We can't force democracy on other countries, and we've spent too many lives and too much money trying to do it. If we cut back on global military commitments, we keep our troops out of harm’s way and save money as well. We may actually improve our image worldwide.
- Because we import so much of our energy, our economy is dependent on countries that are unstable, or worse, hostile to us.

Arguments for this approach:

- We can’t hide from the rest of the world. It has become a global marketplace, whether we like it or not, and America’s success in it requires worldwide stability.
- We can’t leave Iraq and Afghanistan until stable governments are established there. If we do, hostile governments might take over and we’ll be in worse shape than we are now.
- If the U.S. isn’t prepared to defend democracy and human rights around the world, local tyrants will have their way and fledgling democracies will be crushed.
- Rich nations like the U.S. have a moral obligation to come to the assistance of poor nations when they need humanitarian aid.

Our open borders and ineffective immigration laws allow almost anyone to come in without being challenged. Why are we fighting wars overseas to protect ourselves when our own borders are so poorly defended?
- Our needs at home are urgent and require more resources than we currently devote. We need to focus on domestic problems, like education, health care and the economy.
- We’ve got a poor image abroad, and one reason is that we spend too much time involved in other countries’ problems. If we mind our own business, we’ll give other countries less of a reason to hate us.
- We need to fight terrorists and dangerous regimes over there, rather than wait for them to come here.

U.S. spending on international assistance programs
Federal spending on international development and humanitarian and security assistance, as a percentage of total outlays, 1982 – 2007
Choice two: Use persuasion and diplomacy to make us more secure

Use persuasion and diplomacy to make us more secure

What should be done?

- Rely on diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions to bring troublesome governments into line.
- Increase foreign aid to the world’s neediest countries, and expand our commitment to international disaster relief.
- Join with other countries to find a real solution to world environmental problems, like energy and global warming.
- Put more diplomatic pressure on Israel and the Palestinians to reach a peace accord.
- Maintain lines of communication with all kinds of governments and groups worldwide, even those that oppose us.
- Revamp our public diplomacy efforts to spread our message of democracy, free markets and human rights worldwide.
- Close the Guantanamo Bay detention center and either try the prisoners in civilian courts or release them.

Arguments against this approach:

- Some countries, like some people, can’t be reasoned with. It’s naive to think we can talk our way out of all of our problems, and this approach could actually result in us appeasing dangerous governments.

Arguments for this approach:

- Our image abroad has suffered over the last few years, in part because of the war in Iraq. More foreign aid and better public diplomacy could help turn this around.
- By reducing hatred of the U.S. overseas, we’re changing the attitudes that allow anti-American terrorists to thrive. People in other countries may not like terrorism any better than we do, but they’re not going to stick their necks out for a country they don’t like.

Most of the problems we face can’t be solved by acting alone. All countries have to work together to address global warming, for example, and we need the help of other nations to chase down terrorists.

- We need to maintain channels of communication, even with countries that hate us. After all, you don’t need to negotiate with your friends.
- Energy is traded in global markets, and the best way of making sure we have enough is to have good relations with countries that supply it to us.

Diplomacy doesn’t mean much unless you can back it up with military might.

- We have plenty of problems here at home. The money we spend on foreign aid should be used to help needy people here.
- Our tough stance on terrorism is vital to defending the country, and as a result, we haven’t been attacked since September 11. We can’t let up when we face fanatical groups that want to destroy us.
- It’s just not prudent to keep relying on global markets when it comes to energy. The world is far too unstable, and prices are soaring. We need to take control of this by making ourselves more energy independent.

Countries with nuclear weapons

Number of nuclear warheads in known stockpiles, 2007

Note: Israel, India and Pakistan are considered non-NPT nuclear weapon states. Israel is thought to possess enough nuclear material for 100 to 170 weapons. India is thought to have produced enough weapons grade plutonium for 75 to 110 weapons, and Pakistan is thought to have produced enough weapons grade uranium for 50 to 110 weapons. North Korea is considered a nuclear possessor state, and Iran is suspected to have clandestine programs.


Number of nuclear warheads in known stockpiles

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Warheads</th>
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<td>Russia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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CHOICE THREE: ONLY THE U.S. HAS THE CLOUT TO ENSURE GLOBAL STABILITY

We live in a dangerous world, and the United States is the only nation with the clout to provide international leadership and ensure global stability.

What should be done?

- Maintain a military strong enough to fight two wars simultaneously and to act alone, if need be.
- Use economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure and military force on countries that support terrorism or try to acquire nuclear weapons.
- Strengthen and expand U.S. alliances around the world to extend our influence abroad and to maintain stability.
- Be prepared to cooperate with undemocratic regimes when necessary to protect our interests and promote stability.
- Commit as much money and as many troops as needed to build Iraq and Afghanistan into stable democracies.

Arguments for this approach:

- The United States successfully used its power to put communism in retreat worldwide. We now need to do the same with the threats of terrorism and religious authoritarianism.
- Diplomacy is important, but other countries may not have our interests at heart. We can’t withdraw from the world, but we also can’t allow other countries to dictate what the United States will and won’t do.
- The only way the world will be safer for Americans is if we take strong action to make it so.
- Terrorists are ruthless and can’t be negotiated away. We need to take a hard line and attack them wherever they may be. This is no time to worry about legal technicalities or the rights of people who want to destroy us.

Arguments against this approach:

- Our military is already overstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan – even if we wanted to, we don’t have the resources to take on more military actions.
- Our use of force in Iraq especially has been counterproductive. We’ve lost the respect of people worldwide by attacking a country that did not pose an immediate threat to us.
- No country is strong enough to remake the world on its own. Not only is it impossible, but it also alienates potential allies and makes us look like a bully.
- When we ally with repressive governments and ignore human rights, it makes us seem hypocritical. We can’t use force to ensure a stable supply of oil. We need to become energy independent so we don’t have to rely on the rest of the world.

**World competitiveness**

Top ten ranked nations based on economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency and infrastructure, 2008

Note: “World competitiveness” is reported annually by IMD and determined by a detailed list of criteria that are intended to measure how nations create and sustain the competitiveness of enterprises.

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

Think everyone agrees on the problem and what to do about it? Here’s a sampling of what some very different Americans have to say about the issue:

‘And we must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent or omniscient – that we are only 6 percent of the world’s population – that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind – that we cannot right every wrong or reverse every adversity – and that, therefore, there cannot be an American solution to every world problem.’

— John F. Kennedy

‘History teaches that wars begin when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap. To keep the peace, we and our allies must be strong enough to convince any potential aggressor that war could bring no benefit, only disaster.’

— Ronald Reagan

‘The president led us into the Iraq war on the basis of unproven assertions without evidence; he embraced a radical doctrine of pre-emptive war unprecedented in our history; and he failed to build a true international coalition.’

— Nancy Pelosi

‘We are having an important debate about how we keep the country safe. I think we are having an important debate about our responsibilities, our obligations, our interests in the Middle East in the wake of the now increasing evidence of success in Iraq. Those are important judgments for the American people to make.’

— Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

‘If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.’

— Desmond Tutu

‘The nature of the threat – with Iran at the epicenter – is at its core ideological. The threat to the United States is an ideological wing of Islam that is irreconcilable to modern civilization as we know it throughout most of the world. The United States and her allies face a long war with this irreconcilable wing of Islam.’

— Newt Gingrich
Some of the key sources for Iraq, Afghanistan and Beyond are:

Estimated Costs of U.S. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and of Other Activities Related to the War on Terrorism, from the Congressional Budget Office
The nonpartisan budget agency’s estimate of how much we’re spending on the two wars.
http://cbo.gov/doc.cfm?index=8690&type=0

Securing, Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq, June 2008; and Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts to Address the Terrorist Threat in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas Require a Comprehensive Plan and Continued Oversight, May 2008; from the U.S. Government Accountability Office
The government’s independent auditing agency assesses U.S. efforts in Iraq and in pursuing the al Qaeda terrorist group in Pakistan.

Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
This is the result of the United Nations’ effort to bring together scientists from around the world to make the best possible assessment of the problem. Very detailed, very precise and carefully phased.

Iraq Index: Tracking Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq, from the Brookings Institution
This prominent think tank offers its assessment of events in Iraq. Regularly updated.
http://www.brookings.edu/saban/iraq-index.aspx

Backgrounders on al Qaeda and The Taliban in Afghanistan, from Council on Foreign Relations
Readable short histories of the two Muslim extremist groups, by the highly regarded nonpartisan foreign policy organization
http://www.cfr.org/publication/9126/
http://www.cfr.org/publication/10551

Confidence in U.S. Foreign Policy Index, Spring 2008, from Public Agenda
Our twice-yearly survey of public attitudes about international relations, including an Anxiety Indicator to track the public’s sense of how well the U.S. is handling global affairs
http://www.publicagenda.org/reports/public-agenda-confidence-us-foreign-policy-index-spring-2008

Public Agenda is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to strengthen our democracy’s capacity to tackle tough issues. We want to ensure the public’s views are represented in decision-making and that citizens have the tools and information they need to grapple with the critical challenges of the day. We conduct public opinion research, we run public engagement programs around the country, and we run this Web site to give both citizens and leaders the information they need to know.

Our voter guides are designed to help you make sense of what politicians are saying, at least when it comes to the critical issues facing our country. We lay out some key facts along with different points of view about how to address the issue. Each comes with some potential costs and tradeoffs – because every plan has both pros and cons, and a voter should face both honestly. Public Agenda isn’t pushing a particular solution, so whatever you decide is okay with us. But it’ll be easier to judge the candidates once you’ve considered where you want the country to go in the next four years – and what you’re willing to do to get there.

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