



The Democratic Party response

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Senator Dick Durbin delivered the Democratic response. Here again, bypassing the traditional and natural partisan styles, many of the Senator's points were logical. Here is a summarized evaluation:

1) *Escalation and "new direction"*: While it is true that the US needs a "new direction" in the War on Terror, the "direction" should be in line with a strategic and global response to the Jihadi plans. Hence, the measurement is not about escalation or de-escalation, it is about weakening the enemy and adapting to its mutation. Any strategic analyst would recommend that when the enemy escalates, you should find a solution to the escalation, not dodge it. For the next step of the enemy is to perform another escalation. Iran, Syria,

HizbAllah and al Qaeda's constellation are doing just that.

2) *The Abizaid doctrine*: Senator Durbin referred to General John Abizaid's recommendation not to increase US forces unless Iraqis would increase their participation. The argument is not philosophical. General Abizaid didn't state that increasing the forces is a wrong principle, but suggested (and I agreed with him fully) that this surge has to be part of a clear "Iraqization." This equation seems to be a common point to the Administration and the new majority in Congress but both parties seem shy to admit that they have a significant analysis in common: that is to ask for an Iraqi commitment to the campaign.

3) *The sacrifices*: The Senator's response touched again the most sensitive cord: American lives are being lost and the price is heavy. No one would argue with this ethical, philosophical and human fact. Losing lives (pass 3,000) in any circumstances is painful, whatever the circumstances are. But again, in the wider perspective of a war with a determined enemy, the bigger question is this: Would ceasing the campaign in the region insure full security in New York, San Francisco and Midwest America on the medium and long run? The debate is still raging in the US and worldwide. Arguments are solid and powerful on all sides, but at the end of the day the party I would believe is the Jihadists themselves: They want to destroy America's national security and the region's hope for liberty. Until experts in Jihadism prove Bin Laden and Ahmedinijad wrong, the rational approach is to keep liberating, or at least trying to. Any alternative choice should provide us with a full plan as to the protection of the international community from the new menace of the century.

4) *The Iraqis must move forward*: Perhaps the most powerful statement made by the Senator was to strongly address the Iraqi Government. On this issue, Senator Durbin was right on target: Those who have been "liberated" from Saddam must rise and assume their responsibilities. Mr. Durbin's words cannot be brighter enough. Yes, America paid a dear price over the past four years: 3,000 lives and tens of billions of dollars to remove Saddam Hussein and allow the Iraqi new justice sys-

tem to try him. The US helped the Iraqis vote three times, draft a constitution and form a new army. In this fourth year, it is time for Iraqis to stand. In many interviews in Arabic on Iraqi radios I challenged local intellectuals and leaders to move the front lines of the struggle to Iraqi hands. I have called on Iraqi academics and public figures to visit the United States and talk to its people. It was illogical to see the American debate taking place without Iraqi voices. Senator Durbin touched an important cord: The Iraqi Government must be courageous and disarm the militias. Iraqi leaders are ultimately the only ones "to lead their nation to freedom." And as the Democratic response underlined "they cannot be calling for 9/11" to secure neighborhoods and Mosques areas. That was the Abizaid vision: Iraqi soldiers fighting for their cities. I often argued that Iraqi sacrifices were being offered in the wrong places: waiting to be recruited in front of police centers; in front of schools, in buses, in the market place. Instead, if the Iraqi people are consenting to offer sacrifices, allow him to offer its martyrs in a battlefield against al Qaeda or the Iranian militias. But at the end of the day, this is an Iraqi decision, and again both the President and the Senators seemed to be united in this regard.

5) *US commitment*: The Senator's words were carefully chosen when speaking about US commitment. He clearly announced a strong bipartisan support to the troops: They will be equipped, backed up and well armed. That should go without any

doubt. Also, there should not be an open-ended commitment to the Iraqis for a continuous flow of men and women to fight for them, and instead of them. But at the same time, the new Congress must come to realize that the pendulum is not swinging between "fixing Iraq " and "coming back home." The world is not functioning like this. The US went to Iraq to face off with a "threat" not to repair a constitution or arrest a Noriega. Our legislators

must hold all the hearings, briefings and meetings they can hold to see clearer in this War on Terror. True, it isn't about WMDs that weren't found yet but at the same time it is not also about quitting a conflict unilaterally at the timing of the enemy. Both parties need to sit down outside politics and prepare the country to face a threat, which is not going away, just because we hope it would.

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