

# It's Not Just Bush: We're Accountable Too

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Blaming everything on a handful of people at the top, no matter how destructive and abusive they've been, misses a critical point. Systems tend to self-perpetuate. Remove one player and the next comes in to ensure business as usual.

Remove Rumsfeld, a man who helped prop up Hussein in the 80's and skewed intelligence towards war, and who do you get? Robert Gates, a man who helped prop up Hussein in the 80's and skewed intelligence towards war.

Replacing those in power won't help if the power structure itself doesn't change. And that means addressing how our own actions maintain this dysfunctional system.

Decades ago, Rumsfeld and Cheney hoodwinked the American people with fearmongering lies about Soviet military capability, setting the country on a path of paranoia and weapons build-up. 911 let them pull the exact same trick again, with a public more focused on macho vigilantism than on facts and diplomacy.

But the dirty little secret remains: a combative foreign policy requires perpetual conflict. After all, tough-talking cowboys and weapons manufacturers have little value in times of peace, so it's in their interest to foment never-ending strife. Maybe that's why top Pentagon strategist Air Force Brig. Gen. Mark O. Schissler recently warned Americans to prepare for a 50-100 year "generational war."

The Democrats also seem to be hunkering down for a long-term battle against evildoers; their "Six for '06" goals call for doubling the size of "Special Forces to destroy Osama bin Laden and terrorist networks like al Qaeda." An October 2006 report from the Democratic Leadership Council's Progressive Policy Institute additionally noted: "America needs a bigger and better military ... Democrats should step forward with a plan to repair the damage, by adding more troops, replenishing depleted stocks of equipment, and reorganizing the force around the new missions of unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and civil reconstruction."

The wild card in this march towards military domination remains Iran. Bush has already promised Israel protection if it bombs Iran's alleged nuclear facilities, and just this week, Congress voted to double the US stockpiles of military equipment in Israel (turns out that Israel had used much of the US equipment during its war with Lebanon this summer). Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert's recent admission that Israel possesses nuclear weapons is not expected to impact the billions in aid the country receives each year either, even though the US officially bans funding to those producing weapons of mass destruction.

While US involvement in an attack on Iran would invite Armageddon, Bush is backed into a

corner domestically and may feel he doesn't have a whole lot to lose. Leading Democrats (including Clinton and Obama) have also called for the "military option" to be available for Iran, and would most likely push for troops/weapons to protect Israel from retaliation.

Some consider war with Iran as inevitable, but it isn't. The results would be catastrophic and the diplomatic options have not been adequately explored.

More to the point, we must consider how the very legitimizing of perpetual conflict is devastating our national security. The Pentagon's budget currently runs over \$430 billion per year, not including the roughly \$140 billion spent in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Democrats are expected to increase the military budget next year. Meanwhile, domestic social programs are being slashed to compensate for war spending and our military has become severely weakened.

The upshot? We the people need to retire the tough-talking cowboys in both political parties and dump the idea that perpetual conflict is a given. We have to hound members of the 110th Congress to pursue every possible option for peace in the Middle East and we must confront the fear of faceless enemies, which legitimizes rollbacks in our own civil liberties. Above all, we must hold ourselves accountable not to be fooled into war again.

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