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### There is Only One Way to End The War in Iraq, Part IV

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#### IV.

We must choose between human unity or hegemony, peace or war, creation or destruction, life or death. This is not simply about Iraq. This is a test of our capacity to use the science of human relations to restore our world and reclaim our humanity and in doing so stay the nuclear sword of Damocles from dropping while we fumble, drugged by the illusions of power politics.

When support for the "troops in the field", as both Democrats and Republicans have called for, is equated with continuing to fund the war, this continues the occupation with its rising costs and troop and civilian casualties.

But this thinking is likely due for a reappraisal as Democrats return to Washington in January 2007 as the majority. Democratic voters may ask members of Congress who say they oppose the war, but continue to fund it: "We have money to keep the troops in Iraq? But no money to bring them home?" Considering the billions of dollars stolen through private contractor schemes and funds diverted to mercenaries and other professional hitmen, it is more likely that the presence of the troops keeps the money in Iraq, then it is that the money keeps the troops in Iraq.

In 2004 Congress created a mechanism at the request of the Defense Department, a bridge fund, to avoid cash flow method of funding for the troops, until the next Supplemental Bill is passed. Under Title 9 of the Appropriations Bill, Congress appropriated \$25 billion in FY2005, \$50 billion in FY2006, and \$70 billion in bridge funds for the Iraq War. Since the war is costs about \$7.5 million a month, this latest amount will last until approximately the end of June, 2007. There is no immediate cash flow problem. That money bridge can be used to fund troops in the field. It can also be used to bring the troops home.

This is where the debate will center among Democrats. It will begin soon and it will be in earnest and it will determine whether or not Democrats maintain public support. Do we close ranks as a party and move quickly to bring the troops home? Or do we ignore voters' intent and keep the money pouring into Iraq. Congressional approval of appropriations bills since the enactment of the war authorization has enabled the Bush administration to continue the war with hundreds of billions at his disposal.

Democrats have a real chance to use the power of the people to take a new direction, to offer a new plan, to end the occupation by ending the funding of the war. We can rescue our troops and our nation from Iraq. We can rescue whatever vestiges of good reputation the US has in the world. We can claim our constitutional obligation to provide a check and balance to the abuse of Administrative power. History is calling us to a high accounting.

In 2002, the House's Democratic Leader, Richard Gephardt, stood with President Bush in the Rose Garden and announced his support for the initiation of the war against Iraq. He promptly advised the Democratic caucus that we were taking the war "off the table" and each person should do what he or she thought was best. In the process, hopes for a House majority were also taken off the table, not only in 2002 but also in 2004 where the war was muted as an issue because strategists thought that would facilitate the election of a Democratic president.

Iraq surfaced as an issue so powerfully that it so totally dominated the final weeks of the 2006 General Election campaign. Democratic Leader Pelosi, who has been an unwavering opponent of the war, was moved to say, "This election is about three things: Iraq, Iraq and Iraq." Her support for John Murtha as Majority Leader was based on Murtha's pivotal change of heart on the war.

This then is the House (and Senate) that the war built. The American people voted for a new direction for Iraq - - out. This election was a national referendum on the war, whether or not those who will join the 110th Congress took a position on the war. Democrats will be held accountable on Iraq in the 2008 Primaries, whether running for reelection to the House, or the Senate. Unless Congressional Democrats are prepared to truly take a new direction in Iraq, the 2008 Presidential election will be dominated by Iraq.

The war in Iraq will not go away as an issue. If Congress does not act and the war continues until 2009, upwards of 5,000 US troops and perhaps as many as one million Iraqis will have been killed during the US occupation, and the war expenditures would top \$600 billion.

The Democratic majority is upbeat about establishing a domestic agenda including additional funds for health care and education. The war is devouring a domestic agenda. Each and every vote to fund the war is a vote to drive the United States deeper into debt. A brief visit to the National Priorities Project website at [www.costofwar.com](http://www.costofwar.com) will illustrate how much each community loses every minute the Iraq war continues.

Imagine, if in the alternative, the government focused on building bridges in the US, instead of blowing up bridges in other countries, and financed it by spending the money into circulation, as Roosevelt did in the New Deal. Imagine, as Stiglitz and Bilmes do in their study, if money spent on war was spent instead on education, research, alternative energy technologies or helping win hearts and minds by addressing root causes of poverty throughout the world.

There are many reasons why the war will not go away as an issue. The Democratic base will make sure of it. In the 2008 elections, no one will ask "Where are the Democrats?!" They will be in the streets early in 2007 if we are still in Iraq. They will be at the polling places in the 2008 primary elections if we are still in Iraq. They will be there with a powerful reminder that when they demanded that we get out of Iraq in 2006, they meant it.

This is why any further appropriations for Iraq, that does not explicitly fund bringing home the troops, must be defeated. The time to start this determination of a course of action is now. There is only one way to end the war in Iraq and that is to cut off funds. Our troops and the Iraqi people cannot afford to wait.

Yes, American people want a new direction in Iraq, a new way of thinking, away from war and occupation, towards truth and reconciliation and towards healing this nation and the world. The strongest pulsation in the world is not towards fragmentation, chaos and incoherence. It is

toward human unity. We must insist that those who act in the name of the United States of America act on behalf of all humanity in international relations, energy and environment policies and trade. This is how the United States can regain moral ground. Our capacity to lead is dependent on cooperation and courage, on recognizing that the world is interconnected and interdependent.

Our strength must be redefined not by the power of armaments, but by the power of our vision and our hearts, by the depth of our souls measured by wisdom deriving from compassion.

--*Rep. Dennis Kucinich*

