

IRAQ

“Now that America is starting its sixth year of war in Iraq, it is appropriate that all of the candidates speak about it,” said Dr. Steven Porter, independent candidate for Congress in the third district of Pennsylvania. “When we are asked to address the war in debates or on the media, with few exceptions, we have to limit ourselves to questions drawn up by others and to short bursts of time which allow for precious little but meaningless sound bytes. It is for that reason that I have chosen this format to speak.

“That we never should have invaded Iraq is a position I took from day one. For me there were two things which were quite clear then and have become even clearer as the war has gone on. One, there was no credible evidence that the U.S. was in any immediate danger from Iraq; and two, there was every indication that by donning the mantle of a western imperialist, America would greatly weaken her international position and greatly provoke more terrorism.

“That both major parties sanctioned the war and have supported it with the blood of our soldiers and the treasure of our economy will be to their eternal discredit. That the Bush Administration’s conduct of the war has been tolerated without either investigation or impeachment by Congress will weaken us for decades to come. That what Eisenhower called “the military industrial complex” has garnered enough influence to make unnecessary wars profitable will continue to erode an already faltering democracy.

“Beyond these issues, however, is the predicament in which we now find ourselves and, of course, the necessity for dealing with it in some constructive way.

“To begin with, there will be no such a thing as ‘victory’ in Iraq—not in the conventional sense of the word. Terrorism will continue whether we are in or get out of Iraq. There will be hatred of the U.S. in the region for generations to come. Iraq will remain a quagmire internally for a long time. So let us disabuse ourselves of such simplistic and misleading language.

“There will be no heroic end to our role in Iraq. If we leave carelessly, there is every indication that Iraq will erupt in violence on many fronts. Internal tribal conflicts will explode. External powers which might include Iran, Turkey, Syria, Al-Qaeda, and others will undoubtedly try to exert influence. There will be mad scrambles for control of Iraq’s oil, and those scrambles may well destabilize the world markets. In the worst case scenarios, they may throw the world into an even more calamitous economic situation than the recession we currently experience. On the other hand, if we stay in Iraq, there will be no end to the costs for us and for the citizens of that sorry land. Eventually, the results for America might well be just as catastrophic both economically and diplomatically.

“It is a no-win situation for America, a situation in which we must try for the best of a bad group of choices.

“For me, our continued military presence in Iraq is the worst of all choices. It will not stop terrorism. It will not help us to reclaim our posture in the world. It will not help us to recover our economy. It will not allow the Iraqi people dominion over their own land. Getting out in some measured way seems the most prudent course.

“The resultant de-stabilization of Iraq with all its attendant negative repercussions, however, can be minimized if we turn now to the international community and work to internationalize a peace-keeping effort as we draw down our troops. If we can restore the diplomatic graces which this administration has destroyed, we might prevent both a blood bath and a global economic crisis. Indeed, that should be our strongest selling point to the other nations of the world, for both a blood bath and a global fiscal crisis may well involve them.

“So I would support several things done simultaneously. Remove our troops to a safe perimeter as we get other nations to engage in peace-keeping operations. Internationalize the contracts for the rebuilding of Iraq. Give the Iraqis every help in setting up a more internally cooperative government. Make sure that Iraqi oil remains in the control of the Iraqis and internationalize the development of Iraqi oil fields so that the peace-keeping nations have some stake in a positive outcome. Start as soon as possible with the help of the wealthy nations of the world to rebuild the economies of the poorer ones so that the incentive for terrorism is, if not eliminated, then diminished. Work far more diligently for a settlement of the conflict between Israel and Palestine—a settlement which provides for an autonomous Palestinian state and the recognition of the right of Israel to exist. Internationalize the global effort to stop existing terrorism. It is an obscenity that America spends more on war than every other nation in the world combined. We can’t nor should we be the world’s policeman. Fighting terrorism, like fighting pollution, must be a global effort.

“I would also support the immediate development of alternate sources of energy within the borders of the United States as well as an immediate and significant mandate to increase the fuel efficiency of automobiles driven within our borders. This will improve our economy and reduce the need for foreign oil.

“Finally, I would work to fund our elections publicly so that the people elected to Congress are not simply paid lackeys of the special interests in defense or finance, health care or energy which provide the money to get into office, but real servants of the citizens of the nation. That alone would reduce our addition to the profits of war. I have tried to explain all this in my recently published treatise, [AMERICA’S DYING DEMOCRACY](#). I hope everyone will read it.”