

# Heritage Lectures

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## Preventing a Nuclear-Armed Iran: Will China and Russia Help?

*The Honorable Sam Brownback*

In a speech last week, I called for increased support for programs aimed at promoting democracy inside Iran. I also suggested, among other things, a suspension of World Bank lending to Iran and for Secretary of State Rice to appoint a special envoy for human rights in Iran to coordinate democratic reform within the country along with international organizations. My purpose was to encourage a congressional debate about specific initiatives to address the Iranian threat.

Today, I would like to extend the scope of discussion and talk about the broader implications of the threat from Iran. I will also outline some prescriptions designed to address those larger concerns.

### Threats to the Free World

I believe—as Ronald Reagan did during his years defending the free world against Communism and the nuclear threat posed by the Soviet Union—that we are today also engaged in a broader defense for the free world.

In recent days, the world has focused on the escalating violence over a dozen cartoons published by a Danish newspaper. Some are suggesting that this demonstrates a disturbing trend toward a violent clash of cultures. My sincere hope is that it will not lead to that. Continued violence will only fuel the jihadist call by al-Qaeda and its cells operating actively in Iraq and planning actions in sleeper cells around the world.

This is extremely troubling and requires our utmost focus. In addition, there are other trends that threaten the free world.

### Talking Points

- A clear dividing line seems to be emerging between countries that are willing to fight and defend our way of life in free and open societies and those that are not.
- Two key countries that are sending the wrong signals—especially with respect to Iran—are Russia and China. Iran apparently has effectively bought the U.N. Security Council vetoes of both countries, making it difficult for the international community to deal with Iran's nuclear threat.
- As the battle for the free world continues, the United States must keep its military strong and agile, including a robust missile defense program. It also must give a high priority to energy security and border security. And there needs to be an honest forum to hold countries accountable for their failure to observe well-established human rights norms.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl934.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl934.cfm)

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There is a disturbing reincarnation of socialist and nationalist dictatorships raising their heads around the world and even in our own back yard. You see it in places like Venezuela and Bolivia, stoked in no small part by Cuba, and also in Central Asia, and troubling trends in Russia and China. Perhaps we shouldn't make too much of this, but I understand that President Ahmadinejad of Iran recently accepted an invitation from Fidel Castro to visit Cuba. I don't know if they will be meeting to discuss radical Islam, but I'm sure they will be discussing their mutual interests in opposing the West and the rest of the free world.

Even among some who are considered our allies, countries that we played some role in liberating, you see the same strains of socialism, nationalism, and attacks on basic universal values often vented through anti-American rhetoric.

We saw some of this in the discussion leading up to the Iraq war from our European allies. We see it in places like South Korea, a key ally in Northeast Asia, and how these strains actually become reflected in the differing approaches to the threat posed by North Korea.

I'm not suggesting that those who disagree with us on Iraq or the war on terrorism are, therefore, necessarily against us. In fact, for the most part, we share many of the same values, and many of these countries either are or want to be on the same side with us—with the free world.

### Key Countries, Wrong Signals

But if you see the way countries are coalescing and shifting, you begin to see a clear dividing line emerging. On one side are those willing to fight and defend our way of life in free and open societies. On the other are those who don't.

How we in the West send the appropriate signals to those who straddle the middle will significantly affect the outcome of this battle.

Two key countries that are sending the wrong signals are Russia and China.

You see this most clearly in our differing approaches to Iran, but you also see it in the six-party talks regarding North Korea, in energy security and democratization steps in Central Asia and the Caucasus, in the recent decision by Russia to

invite the Hamas leadership for discussions, and in the two countries' approaches to countries around the world and in our own backyard—especially in China's economic outreach to countries in Asia, South America, Central Asia and Africa.

Part of the problem over Iran is that it has effectively bought U.N. Security Council vetoes from China and very likely Russia. Iran is reported to have signed deals valued at \$100 billion or more with both of these countries and others. Russia is similarly securing regime survival by leveraging, if not blackmailing, its way through energy—as we recently saw in Georgia and Ukraine—by threatening Europe to the point of rendering it ineffective and incapable of confronting Russia and, in the process, Iran.

It's important that we are very clear-eyed about this and not get distracted by our necessary engagement on things like cooperation on the global war on terrorism, or the need for a comprehensive energy security strategy, or even things like threat reduction cooperative agreements.

### Advancing Toward Victory

The battle for the free world will be fought on many levels, but just as Reagan said of the Cold War, our goal in this battle is not to somehow survive it, but to end it victoriously.

And in order to make sure we do, here are a few points to keep in mind.

**One, we have to keep our military strong and agile.** Before 9/11, our defense policy was based on a simple premise: The United States does not start fights; we will never be an aggressor. That is still our policy today.

But in this post-9/11 world, we will do whatever is necessary—even if it means pre-emptive surgical actions—to make sure that a 9/11 never happens again. We will always maintain our strength in order to deter and defend against aggression and to preserve our freedom and maintain peace.

**Two, we should review and if necessary step up our missile defense program.** Only last week, President Putin boasted that Russia had tested a missile system that no one else in the world has. I'm not sure what that means, but I know what our response should be. President Bush was absolutely

correct in withdrawing from the ABM Treaty to make sure that we can continue to defend against such continuing threats.

We forget that it was only in 1991 that our troops during the first Gulf war were actually killed by missiles. A single SCUD missile hit a U.S. military barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 of our soldiers and wounding 99.

Today, our capacity to shoot down even a relatively crude SCUD missile is not much improved from that time. Our forces in Iraq and Korea—and the civilian populations they defend—have almost no means of protection against Iranian or North Korean ballistic missiles armed with both chemical and conventional warheads.

With no missile defenses, an attack by North Korea on the Korean peninsula or Japan, or Iran attacking Iraq or Israel, could result in tens or even hundreds of thousands of casualties.

We know for a fact that both Iran and North Korea have pursued an aggressive ballistic missile program and have been closely engaged with each other on their respective programs.

**Three, we must develop the equivalent of a Manhattan project for energy security.** Let me read you something which may put this into perspective:

We know that we are paying a high price in dollars for imported oil—how much are we paying in loss of independence and self-respect?... Are we choosing paths that are politically expedient and morally questionable? ... Are we as Americans so thirsty for oil that we'll forget the traditions upon which our country is founded and let our foreign policy be dictated by anyone who has oil for sale?

Those prophetic words are from a radio broadcast by Ronald Reagan back in July 9, 1979, during the Iran hostage crisis.

Along with Senator Lieberman and others, I introduced the Energy Security Bill to use existing technologies with a variety of tax incentives to reduce our dependence on oil. Fifty percent of Americans drive less than 20 miles a day. If we give consumers a viable choice other than petroleum to cover that distance, while allowing petroleum for longer dis-

tances, then our dependence on hydrocarbons from unstable regimes will be drastically reduced.

**Four, we must coordinate our intelligence operations with the Patriot Act.** The U.S. recently caught four Iraqis crossing over from Mexico. Our immigration policy must be legal and fair to those who follow the rules and catch and punish those who don't.

**Finally, we need to develop some multilateral forum to recommit nations to basic and universal rules of human liberty and dignity.** These principles will not only include security and economic dimensions but the human dimensions as well.

It is clear that there is no clear leadership on this at the United Nations. We need an honest forum in which we begin the work of holding members accountable for their failure to observe well-established human rights norms.

We're not lacking in venues, but we do need a cohesive political will to do something. I realize that the Council for a Community of Democracies, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other organizations already seek to promote democracy and human rights outside of the U.N. framework.

But these organizations, as one Heritage analyst said, vary in their formal structures, binding commitments, and supporting structures and bureaucracies. I'm not sure if it's possible to modify one of these organizations to remove limits on membership or regional scope and extend its focus, but we must try.

For example, the OSCE performs useful tasks, but is Eurocentric by its charter and membership. Getting it or other multilateral organizations to broaden their mission may be a route to including the Middle East and possibly other regions.

I'm not going to commit what would clearly be heresy here at Heritage and suggest a new multilateral institution. But I do believe we need to create a venue for committing nations to observe basic human rights and freedoms and apply some of the underlying principles, such as the Helsinki Accords, that animated these institutions. This will require a commitment from the highest levels of key governments.

In this forum, we must boldly refer to those who are against freedom and open societies for what they are, and we must have the courage to challenge the leaders in those countries that support these groups and others who speak only of détente.

If you listen to those who attack us, all you hear about is America's problems. I know that I'm preaching to the choir, but it never hurts to be reminded that our heritage and our nation and its role in the world are both sound and principled—and necessary.

To quote a Chinese newspaper editor who was being harassed by Chinese authorities:

I wonder if anybody has thought what the situation would be if there were not in existence the United States—if there were not this giant country prepared to make so many sacrifices.

We are making sacrifices around the world—our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, our diplomatic missions around the world, and ordinary Americans in the course of their daily lives.

We have to seize the opportunity today in the leadership the American people have entrusted to us to create common interests and ensure the forward progress of liberty. Otherwise, we'll have other threats.

We must push for the values that make us an exceptional nation—such universal principles as human rights and dignity, religious freedom, and democratic governance. Conservatives must lead this issue.

### **A Tighter Squeeze on Iran**

Let me offer one other suggestion on Iran. As some of you may recall, back in 1982, President Reagan was faced with the problem of preventing the construction of a natural gas pipeline from the communist-controlled and Soviet-dominated East into Western Europe. He imposed sanctions against any U.S. oil companies participating in the project. He was immediately undermined by European allies who circumvented the sanctions and allowed their own energy companies to replace U.S. contractors.

Reagan didn't budge. Instead, he applied portions of the Export Control Act and announced that he was extending the sanctions to include any for-

eign companies that were using U.S.-licensed technology. If, for example, a French company used U.S.-licensed technologies on the pipeline, that company could not sell in the U.S. market.

European leaders were outraged, and a compromise followed.

In exchange for backing down, Reagan got the Europeans to commit to tightening loans, dramatically reducing the size of the natural gas projects and tightening controls on technology exports.

If some of our allies fail to support a tighter squeeze on Iran, President Bush should consider a similar move, especially against China and Russia. Russia and China, like the former Soviet Union, need international technological and management support to keep their activities going.

And no international company is going to treat lightly exclusion from the U.S. market in exchange for a contract with the Iranian government.

In closing, let me say that Tehran has no interest in seeing a stable, democratic Iraq next door. That is certainly an additional reason why we must succeed in Iraq.

There is no other way. Only by facing the prospect of economic collapse, brought on by massive American and international pressure—and a successful Iraq—will Iran be motivated to do the right thing.

Back in 1974, Reagan said,

The dustbin of history is littered with the remains of those countries that relied on diplomacy to secure their freedom. We must never forget...in the final analysis...that it is our military, industrial and economic strength that offers the best guarantee of peace for America in times of danger.

That is as true today as it was back in the dark days of the Cold War.

We are similarly engaged in a war of our generation. And as Reagan said of his battle, we can't just survive this war and hope that future generations will somehow finish the job. It is up to us to win it. And we will!

—*The Honorable Sam Brownback represents Kansas in the United States Senate.*