



## 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary Endorsement Guide



### ***US Role in the World***

#### **QUESTION**

When, if ever, is "regime change" a justifiable policy, whether through overt or covert means? And how does the case of Iran fit into your thinking?

What principles will guide your decisions to intervene in the face of future humanitarian crises?

Do you favor more Free Trade Agreements, and if so, what would you do to mitigate the risks they pose?

#### **BACKGROUND**

"Regime change" may be the most dangerous concept in foreign policy. The Nuremberg Trials defined "war of aggression" as a crime in the hope of maintaining a lasting peace. "Regime change" contradicts this logic, arguing that a war of aggression IS legitimate if a foreign government is sufficiently "bad," whatever "bad" might mean. Support for terrorism is the most common definition, though even this can be variously defined. George Bush brought the debate over regime change front and center by ordering the invasion of Iraq absent any imminent or even credible threat, but it's worth remembering that regime change became US policy in 1998 under President Clinton. Had Clinton not been willing to placate the neocons, would that have stopped Bush's march to war in 2002-2003? Probably not. But was it really ever legitimate for the United States to call for the overthrow of a foreign government, aiding various unsavory groups who sought to benefit from the Iraqi dictator's overthrow? Many would now say a nation's own people should decide its future. Let's call it, say, the Prime Directive.

With Iraq out of the way (ha-ha), the next logical target for proponents of regime change is Iran. Iran's history of hostility toward America and Israel and support for Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories is well established. And Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's history of provocative and irresponsible statements is also well documented. Iran has been accused of providing weapons to insurgents and/or aiding attacks against American troops in Iraq. Yet there is still little evidence. Additionally, Iran is frequently accused of defying the world with its "nuclear program," a vague and loaded term. While there is reason to be suspicious, Iran is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which gives signatory nations the right to enrich uranium to fuel nuclear power plants in return for pledging not to develop highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons. Signatories are also expected to submit to regular inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which Iran is doing. Even assuming that this administration does not strike Iran, the next president will need to accomplish a good deal simply to restore the status quo ante Bush.

A survey of foreign policy and national security experts in the September/October issue of Foreign Policy magazine found that only 25% of self-described conservatives agreed with the statement "Iran is a threat to the United States that requires military action now" (58% of conservatives agreed with the statement "Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy now"). (1) Regarding Iran's nuclear program, 67% of self-described conservatives strongly disagreed with the recommendation "Conduct military strikes now against Iran's nuclear facilities" (26% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed). (2)

The next president will certainly face new crises that will demand action -- not invasion, airstrikes or occupation -- but some kind of humane, responsible action. Most of us would agree that America should not sit still when a government declares war on its own people, or when a failed state leads to uncontrolled mass killings. In the 1990s we were left saying "No more Rwandas." In this decade it's "No more Darfurs." Responding to true humanitarian disasters will require the same kind of intensive,

sustained and multilateral approach that was used to put an end to the civil war in Bosnia and "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland.

In general, the Democratic candidates sound quite similar in their statements about "Regime Change" and policy toward Iran. Senators Clinton, Dodd and Obama have supported additional sanctions on Iran for pursuing a nuclear energy program, yet the all the candidates have opposed the recent Lieberman-Kyl amendment on Iran (with one notable exception). There are some differences of opinion regarding Free Trade Agreements as well.

## BIDEN

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee.</p> <p>Opposed Lieberman-Kyl amendment supporting the president's designation of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Opposed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in 2005.</p> <p>Opposed Free Trade Agreements with Oman (2006), Singapore and Chile (2003).</p> <p>Opposed Trade Act of 2002, which reauthorized the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA) (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru).</p> <p>Supported US-China Relations Act, ensuring normalized trade relations (2000).</p> <p>Supported Africa Free Trade Agreement (1999).</p> <p>Supported NAFTA (1993).</p> <p>Opposed Fast-Track Trade Authority.</p>	<p><b>Iran</b></p> <p>No one likes this regime, but let's keep our eye on the first prize: preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. How can we tell Iran not to go nuclear, but then in the next breath tell the regime our goal is to take it down? ... I believe we must continue to intensify pressure on Iran over its nuclear program with coordinated international sanctions that isolate Tehran, not the United States. We should complement this pressure by presenting a detailed, positive vision for U.S.-Iran relations if Iran does the right thing. And we should engage Iran directly to exploit fissures within the government and between the government and the people. (3)</p> <p><b>Afghanistan</b></p> <p>If we should be surging forces anywhere, it is to Afghanistan. That country is not lost, but it is on the brink of a major comeback by the Taliban, Al Qaeda, warlords and drug traffickers. Our necessary investment in blood and treasure risks being squandered -- we need an infusion of military and economic assistance and a plan to wean that country away from drugs. (4)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises</b></p> <p>Introduced S. Res. 276, calling for deployment of UN peacekeeping force to supplement African Union forces, support operations from NATO countries, US if necessary. Advocates that UN set a deadline on Sudanese government for accepting larger mission (23,000 peacekeepers) and increased diplomatic efforts.</p> <p>Has called for NATO to declare and police a "No Fly Zone" over Darfur; for an international peacekeeping mission we should impose if Khartoum says no; and serious sanctions against the regime which is aiding and abetting the slaughter of innocents. (5)</p>

## CLINTON

<b>Record</b>	<b>Platform/Statements</b>
<p>Supported Lieberman-Kyl amendment supporting the president's designation of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Cosponsor of S.970, the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007, imposing sanctions on Iran and other nations for assisting Iran's nuclear program.</p> <p>Opposed to pending Korea Free Trade Act</p> <p>Opposed CAFTA (2005)</p> <p>Supported Free Trade Agreements with Oman, Singapore, Chile (2006, 2003) and Australia (2004)</p> <p>Opposed Free Trade Act of 2002 (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru)</p>	<p><b>Iran</b> 2/14/07: Currently, our intelligence on Iran is of uncertain quality. We need to examine the facts closely and carefully. No action can or should be taken without explicit Congressional authorization. And knowing what we know now, this body needs a steady stream of real, verifiable intelligence. (6)</p> <p>7/10/07: We ended the genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans without sacrificing a single American life. The Administration should learn from the progress made in North Korea and take a similar approach toward Iran and Syria. (7)</p> <p><b>Afghanistan</b> 10/31/06: Afghanistan and NATO need us as a leading partner.... We should begin by responding to our NATO commander's call for more troops in Afghanistan, where on a per capita basis we have spent 25 times less than we spent in Bosnia, and deployed one-fiftieth as many troops. (8)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises</b> Supporter of Biden's S. Res. 276, calling for UN peacekeepers for Darfur.</p>

## DODD

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Opposed Lieberman-Kyl amendment supporting the president's designation of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Cosponsor of S.970, the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007, imposing sanctions on Iran and other nations for assisting Iran's nuclear program.</p> <p>Author of S.1612, the International Emergency Economic Powers Enhancement Act, increasing penalties to violators of US sanctions.</p> <p>Opposed CAFTA (2005).</p> <p>Opposed Free Trade Agreements with Oman, Singapore, Chile (2006, 2003).</p> <p>Opposed Free Trade Act of 2002 (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru).</p> <p>Supported US-China Relations Act, ensuring normalized trade relations (2000).</p> <p>Supported Africa Free Trade Agreement (1999).</p> <p>Supported NAFTA (1993).</p>	<p>Iran:</p> <p>Told a University of South Carolina audience he endorsed the Bush administration's recent willingness to hold joint talks on Iraq with Syria and Iran. But Dodd, also a presidential hopeful, said the United States needs to avoid talking with Ahmadinejad and called him "a thug." (9)</p> <p>To date there has been a total absence of any serious U.S. diplomatic efforts to dissuade Iran from continuing its ill-conceived and destabilizing policies. I am extremely concerned that your administration's failure to employ robust diplomacy in dealing with... Iran could lead us down the same disastrous and ill-conceived path that has produced a failed policy in Iraq that has made us less secure. (10)</p> <p><b>Afghanistan:</b></p> <p>Asked NATO Secretary-General for greater involvement from partner nations in military operations in a joint letter with Sen. Chuck Hagel: "We ask that you continue to encourage allies to lift the numerous restrictions placed on their forces and to continue to press all allies to deliver on promised support for NATO's operations...." (11)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises:</b></p> <p>Supports increased peacekeeping efforts and sanctions on Sudan: "[I]n order to actually stop the violence, we must ensure that the hybrid force is large enough to effectively carry out its mission, and deployed quickly to stop the violence immediately." (12)</p>

## EDWARDS

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>At Sept 26, 2007 Democratic Primary debate in Manchester, NH, spoke against Lieberman-Kyl amendment supporting the president's designation of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Opposed Chile Free Trade Agreement (2003).</p> <p>Supported US-China Relations Act, ensuring normalized trade relations (2000).</p> <p>Opposed Africa Free Trade Agreement (1999).</p>	<p><b>Iran</b>            “We should take steps to open Iran to democratic culture and ideas and should use diplomacy to separate extremists like Ahmadinejad from leaders more inclined to stabilize Iran’s relations with the world.” (DC for Democracy questionnaire). Will negotiate with Iranian leaders who have met a number of criteria, such as recognition of the international rule of law, recognition of the rights of Jews and the state of Israel, and a commitment to the promise of diplomacy. (14)</p> <p><b>Afghanistan</b>            Increase Special Forces in the country.. Would work with our principal allies and the other members of NATO to ensure the commitment of adequate forces and rules of engagement robust enough to ensure their ability to defeat the Taliban and ensure continuing progress of the democratic government in Afghanistan. (15)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises</b>            Advocates for taking immediate steps to end the violence in Darfur, Sudan, including deployment of up to 3,000 UN peacekeepers with American logistical, airlift and intelligence support, multilateral sanctions on the Sudanese government and others involved in the violence, and the establishment of "a no-fly zone over the region, to cut off supplies to the brutal Janjaweed militias and end Sudanese bombing of civilians in Darfur." (16)</p> <p>Also advocates for high-level American involvement in resolving the long-running Ugandan civil war, including funding for the UN's Juba Initiative Fund (supporting the Juba Peace Talks and the dispatching of a Presidential Envoy to work in cooperation with the UN's Peace Envoy (17)</p> <p><b>Free Trade Agreements</b>            “Trade agreements like NAFTA and the WTO include special privileges for corporations, such as strong remedies for commercial rights and unprecedented rights to challenge environmental and health laws. I believes that trade agreements should be judged by their effect on regular families and include strong rights for workers. ... I believe that all of our trade partners should be required to enforce at least the core labor rights defined by the International Labor Organization: the right to organize and bargain collectively and prohibitions against forced labor, child labor, and discrimination. ... I will also require strong environmental standards so multinational companies cannot profit by exploiting weak environmental laws and enforcement in some countries. “(18)</p>

## GRAVEL

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Strong opponent of military threats against Iran and other unfriendly nations.</p> <p>Solid opponent of all Free Trade bills, including NAFTA.</p>	<p><b>Regime Change</b> Regime change, whether overt or covert, has had consistently negative long-term effects not only on the populations of countries whose regimes were the targets of change, but also negative repercussions to the United States in the form of blowback. The only justifiable scenario for regime change is after the overt aggression of one sovereign nation against another. (19)</p> <p><b>Iran</b> Senator Gravel firmly opposes a military confrontation with Iran and advocates a diplomatic solution to the current situation. ... The threat of war against another sovereign nation while wars continue to rage in Iraq, the Palestinian Authority and Afghanistan, only serves to further threaten global stability. (20)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises</b> All humanitarian crises are important especially in an age when America's international reputation is battered. The United States should be willing to provide humanitarian aid at any opportunity when it is welcomed. (21)</p> <p><b>Free Trade Agreements</b> So-called "free trade" agreements have not fostered free trade, rather they have sought to further entangle government bureaucracy with the business sector. As we see elsewhere in public policy, when the government gets involved with business, it is upper management and shareholders who benefit from such agreements, not the workers or the American people. (22)</p>

## KUCINICH

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Opposed Lieberman-Kyl amendment on Iran.</p> <p>Solid opponent of all Free Trade, advocates for withdrawal from NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.</p> <p>Opposed US-China Relations Act, ensuring normalized trade relations (2000).</p>	<p><b>Iran</b> "The Senate is negligently using this designation to convince the American public into accepting that a war with Iran is inevitable," Kucinich said. ... "This new label provides further evidence for Iran's leaders that there is no point to engage in diplomatic talks with the United States as if our actions point directly to regime change," Kucinich said. (23)</p>

## OBAMA

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Was not in the chamber during the vote on Lieberman-Kyl amendment regarding Iran, but issued statement opposing the following day.</p> <p>Cosponsor of S.970, the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007, imposing sanctions on Iran and other nations for assisting Iran's nuclear program.</p> <p>Supported Oman Free Trade Agreement (2006).</p> <p>Opposed CAFTA (2005).</p>	<p><b>Regime Change</b> No President should ever hesitate to use force – unilaterally if necessary – to protect ourselves and our vital interests when we are attacked or imminently threatened. But when we use force in situations other than self-defense, we should make every effort to garner the clear support and participation of others. ...[F]orce is the costliest weapon in the arsenal of American power in terms of lives and treasure. And it's far from the only measure of our strength. (24)</p> <p><b>Iran</b> The world must prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. ... In pursuit of this goal, we must never take the military option off the table. But our first line of offense here must be sustained, direct and aggressive diplomacy. (25)</p> <p><b>Free Trade Agreements</b> I will only sign trade agreements that have meaningful labor and environmental standards. Moreover, to mitigate the risks of these deals, it is absolutely critical that the federal government strengthens its program to assist American workers who lose their good jobs to trade-related forces. My plan will extend trade adjustment assistance to service industries and provide retraining assistance for workers in sectors of the economy vulnerable to dislocation before they lose their jobs. (26)</p> <p>8/8/07: I would immediately call the president of Mexico, the president of Canada to try to amend NAFTA because I think that we can get labor agreements in that agreement right now. (27)</p>

## RICHARDSON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Long-time UN Ambassador, envoy involved in multiple peace agreements and negotiations.</p> <p>Strong proponent of NAFTA, further expanded free trade agreements.</p>	<p><b>Regime Change:</b> The neoconservative experiment for radical transformation through unilateralism has ended in failure, having proved itself poorly adapted to the realities of the 21st century. The war in Iraq has demonstrated that raw US power cannot transform the Middle East -- instead, it has shown that the unrestrained and careless use of that power can damage credibility and weaken alliances. ... [N]eoconservative efforts to transform other societies through force were naïve and ill-conceived. (28)</p> <p><b>Iran:</b> 2/24/07: Saber-rattling is not a good way to get the Iranians to cooperate. But it is a good way to start a new war -- a war that would be a disaster for the Middle East, for the United States and for the world. ... A better approach would be for the United States to engage directly with the Iranians and to lead a global diplomatic offensive to prevent them from building nuclear weapons. We need tough, direct negotiations, not just with Iran but also with our allies, especially Russia, to get them to support us in presenting Iran with credible carrots and sticks. (29)</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Crises:</b> The United States should have sent a special envoy as soon as the mass killings began in Darfur and should now put pressure not only Sudan, but also on other states, like China, that have influence in Sudan. US diplomatic engagement and leadership is essential to put global, multilateral pressure on such regimes. One way of doing so would be to enthusiastically support the International Criminal Court, so that individual leaders who engage in or allow crimes against humanity know they will be held accountable. (30)</p>

## FURTHER READING

Council on Foreign Relations: Campaign 2008. Available at: <http://www.cfr.org/campaign2008/>

## NOTES

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- (18) John Edwards. DC for Democracy questionnaire.
- (19) Mike Gravel. DC for Democracy questionnaire.
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- (26) Ibid.
- (27) Barack Obama. Democratic debate, 8/7/07. Available at:  
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