

Why Bush Must Be Re-elected

Edward I. Koch

Thursday, July 22, 2004

I support the re-election of President George W. Bush. Why? Because I believe one issue overwhelms all others: the president's strong commitment to fight the forces of international terrorism regardless of the cost or how long it takes to achieve victory.

I do not agree with President Bush on a single major domestic issue, but in my view those issues pale in comparison with the threat of international terrorism.

Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the evil poster boys of mass murder, are revered and supported by millions of Muslims throughout the world. The stated goal of al-Qaida and its supporters is to kill or convert every infidel, and that means Jews, Christians, Buddhists and everyone else who will not accept Islam's supremacy.

These terrorists are convinced that non-Islamic nations do not have the will and courage to persevere in this ongoing struggle, which could last decades. They believe the democracies are weak-willed and will ultimately yield to whatever demands are made upon them.

By withdrawing their troops from Iraq in response to terrorist attacks, Spain and the Philippines have already shown that, tragically, terror tactics, including suicide attacks, car bombings and the beheading of innocent civilians, do work.

The terrorists also intend to destroy moderate Muslim governments that want to live in peace with countries that are not Islamic.

Shortly after 9/11, President Bush announced his commitment to the struggle against Islamic fanatics, who believe they can destroy the values of Western civilization and democratic governments everywhere. On entering this war against terrorism after 9/11, President Bush said, "We shall go after the terrorists and the countries that harbor them."?

This Bush Doctrine rivals in importance the Monroe Doctrine, which limited the colonization efforts of foreign powers in the Western Hemisphere, and the Truman Doctrine, which contained the spread of Communism. President Bush has proven that he is prepared to keep to his commitment to fight terrorism.

If John Kerry were to win this presidential election, would he stand up to terrorism to the same extent as George Bush has? I don't think so. Regrettably, my party, the Democratic Party, now has a strong radical

left wing whose members often dominate the party primaries. Those same left-wing radicals have an anti-Israel philosophy, reviling that democratic state which shares the values held by a majority of Americans.

Kerry is a patriotic American who performed heroically in the Vietnam War. Regrettably, he surrendered his philosophical independence to the left wing in the recent primaries in order to prevail over the original darling of the radicals, Howard Dean. Kerry owes his nomination in large part to the supporters of Dean and the support of Senator Ted Kennedy.

Kennedy sadly demonstrated his loss of any sense of decency with his crude attacks on President Bush using unacceptable, abusive language. The hatred deliberately stirred by Kennedy directed at President Bush is contemptible and dangerous. It encourages our terrorist enemies with whom we are at war, and it incites the crazies in our own country.

On July 9, a Kerry-Edwards fund-raising concert was held at Radio City Music Hall. During that concert Hollywood comedienne Whoopi Goldberg engaged in unprintable, despicable, sexual references to the president and the vice president. She combined the president's family name with allusions to the female anatomy, and she made a sexual reference to Vice President Dick Cheney's first name by referring to the male anatomy.

Even worse was Kerry's thank-you from the stage to all of the performers saying that they conveyed "the heart and soul of our country." Shameful.

Now a comment about the war in Iraq. Most Americans understand that few, if any, wars go smoothly. Just cast your mind back to the American Revolutionary War, during which New York City was occupied by enemy forces for seven years, or the American Civil War, in which Confederate armies won victory after victory on the battlefield, or even World War II, in which the Nazi menace was defeated at an enormous cost in human lives. Should we have gone to war with Iraq? I believe the answer is yes.

During a daily briefing after 9/11, then CIA Director George Tenet told the president that Iraq had the ability to wage chemical and biological war on the U.S. He referred to Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction as a "slam dunk." Had the president not engaged in the pre-emptive war against Saddam, and if this madman had subsequently released in the U.S. biological agents or poison gas, which he had already used against the Kurds and Iran, does anyone doubt that the president would have been impeached?

The security agencies of nearly every democratic nation provided to their president or prime minister the same description of Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction capability. The U.S. Congress had the same information and concurred with the president's decision. The U.N. Security Council unanimously concurred, passing Resolution 1441.

But it was President Bush who had the courage to take up arms in defense of the U.S. and our allies. That is what leadership is all about.

A poll released by the Washington Post on July 14, 2004, showed that “55 percent of Americans approve of the way Bush is handling the campaign against terrorism” and “51 percent also said they trust Bush more than Kerry to deal with terrorism, while 42 percent prefer the Democrat.”

We also should not forget that President Bush, in my opinion, has been the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House. At the U.N. Security Council and in the U.N. General Assembly, allies of the U.S. and others who are indifferent or hostile to our country have conveyed the view that if we end our alliance with Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, they would welcome back the US. into their circle. President Bush has refused to abandon our ally Israel.

In my opinion, the U.S. presidents who have been Israel’s greatest friends are, in order, the current President Bush, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. This November, we Americans in the Jewish community should remember our friends. We should thank President Bush for his courage in the war against terrorism and for his strong and consistent support for Israel and democracy.

Edward I. Koch is the former mayor of New York City. His commentary for Bloomberg radio is republished here. You can hear his weekly radio show by going to www.bloomberg.com/radio

