

## War in Iraq: The Next Two Years

By Amy E. Wong



The excitement of this past week was positively electrifying. After 12 years, Democrats have finally regained control of Congress. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) became the first female House Speaker. Saddam Hussein, one of the world's most notorious terrorists, has finally been executed. And last, but not least, we are all gearing up for word on Bush's new strategy in our War in Iraq.

The Iraq War has been on the top of everybody's agenda for the longest time. In our midterm elections, the American voice was heard when it voted Democrat, a surprising turn of events that reflected our nation's frustration with how the Iraq War was being handled. Now that Republicans have finally ceded control of Congress to the Democrats, exactly what changes should we expect?

First, let's take a look at the main players:

### President Bush

President Bush is a straight-shooter. You can love him or hate him for it. One thing that he remains unswerving on is America's need to remain in Iraq.

Earlier last month, The Iraq Study Group released a report that recommended the withdrawal of U.S. troops in Iraq over the next 15 months, as well as direct talks with Iran and Syria. In response to their expert opinions, Bush said the following:

- "This business about graceful exit just simply has no realism to it."
- "One way to assure failure is just to quit, is not to adjust and say it's just not worth it."

Bush promised to "seriously consider" the recommendations provided by The Iraq Study Group, but I highly doubt if he'll act in accordance. His new war strategy will be released later on this week. Many analysts and politicians predict that Bush intends to build U.S. troops by 20,000 soldiers and increase military funding by \$100 billion.

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Although President Bush has promised to collaborate with the Democrats, he expressed his intent to forge ahead with his own goals, saying in *The Wall Street Journal* that he still has “one-quarter of [his] presidency, plenty of time to accomplish important things for the American people.”

## Democrats

Two days after Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) assumed her position as House Speaker on Jan. 4, she directly addressed Bush’s agenda for the Iraq War, saying, “There’s not a carte blanche, a blank check for him to do whatever he wishes there.” She made it perfectly clear that any move that the Bush administration takes will be the subject of intense scrutiny.

Pelosi continued, “The burden is on the president to justify any additional resources for a mission. Congress is ready to use its constitutional authority of oversight to question what is the justification for this spending, what are the results we are receiving.”

Pelosi hinted at denying funds to send more troops to Iraq in order to foil President Bush’s agenda.

However, it should be noted that some Democrats have questioned Pelosi’s ability to deny Bush the money for additional troops.

- House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) said, “I don’t want to anticipate that.”
- Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) concurred that increasing troops would be a “tragic mistake,” but also acknowledged the fact that Congress does not have the authority to question the Commander In Chief’s military strategy. He said, “There’s no way to say, ‘Mr. President, stop.’”

## Republicans

Previously, in the Republican-majority Congress, Bush spent \$500 billion in anti-terrorism efforts and built up a U.S. Army that boasted 490,000 soldiers.

In response to Pelosi’s comment, Republicans have expressed their concerns in blocking the president’s plans and withdrawing troops. These are some of their comments:

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- Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said, “Congress is incapable of micromanaging the tactics in the war.”
- Senator John McCain (R-AZ) said, “When we authorized this war, we accepted the responsibility to make sure they would prevail. Even greater than the costs incurred thus far and in the future are the catastrophic consequences that would ensure from our failure in Iraq.”
- Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) criticized Democrats’ “formula for defeat” by saying, “If we don’t start over and do what we should have done in the beginning—having enough people to win this war—we will pay a heavy price.”

In general, Republicans expressed the desire to build troops and increase military budget in order to ensure our success in Iraq.

So, *what changes can we expect in Iraq over the course of the next two years?*

I’m afraid that the answer is, “Not much.” The bottom line is, no matter how strongly Democrats oppose the War in Iraq, they have no constitutional power in the war. The only person who does have any real power is our Commander In Chief, President Bush.

Experts, such as The Iraq Study Group, can give their recommendations; Democrats can question Bush’s policies; Americans can bemoan our state of foreign affairs, but one thing remains constant: Bush is the only one with authority. And, from all the things he has said and done, I think it’s safe to say that more troops will be deployed to Iraq while our nation’s debt continues to grow.