

Where's the Check-and-Balance?

By Amy E. Wong



On Jan. 10, President Bush officially announced his plans to increase the number of troops in Iraq by 20,000 and the number of soldiers and marines in the U.S. military by 92,000. Not only is this going to set the U.S. government \$8.5-trillion-debt back by hundreds of billions of dollars, but it is also incurring the indignant wrath of American citizens, military officials, and lawmakers alike.

The Washington Post tallied up the ways in which Bush is defying both resistance and advice:

1. "Pentagon insiders say members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have long opposed the increase in troops and are only grudgingly going along with the plan because they have been promised that the military escalation will be matched by renewed political and economic efforts in Iraq."
2. "Gen. John P. Abizaid, the outgoing head of the Central Command, said less than two months ago that adding U.S. troops was not the answer for Iraq."
3. "There is little question that more troops for Iraq seemed far from the conventional wisdom in Washington after the beating Bush and the Republican Party took in the midterm elections Nov. 7."
4. "[W]hen Bush met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Amman, Jordan, on Nov. 30, Maliki did not ask for more American troops as part of a new Baghdad security plan he presented to Bush, U.S. officials said."
5. "[The Iraq Study Group] delivered its recommendations, including proposing a high-level dialogue with Iran and Syria to help stabilize Iraq and setting a goal of early 2008 for the removal of almost all U.S. combat troops."

Congress has even piped in their strong opposition. Four days after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) hinted at resisting a troop surge, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) dubbed the Iraq War as Bush's Vietnam and proposed legislation that would block funding for additional troops without Congressional approval. While Bush's approval ratings have dipped to an all-time low, several Republican lawmakers who once supported Bush's war strategy are jumping ship.

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Despite all the concerns that plague us here in America, President Bush doggedly forges ahead with his plan to win the War in Iraq. In a *60 Minutes* special on Jan. 14, Bush said that he will “keep explaining” his plans in order to overcome public and Congressional resistance. He asserted that he—not Congress—holds authority on military decisions. Ultimately, Bush holds responsibility for the future well-being of both our country and Iraq.

I understand that President Bush is trying to stamp out terrorism and make our world a safer and better place, but he is isolating himself from others who offer him help. There are alternatives strategies that our country can adopt.

It is not necessary for us to plant ourselves in Iraq’s infrastructure for an undisclosed amount of time. Rather, it seems wiser to train Iraqi soldiers, and then let them have increasing defensive responsibility while we slowly withdraw our troops. They can handle matters with insurgents while we handle matters with Al Qaeda. We need to step back, reevaluate, and prioritize. Sadly, the decision has been made. It is too late.

It seems that we, as a country, have no influence on the decisions of our leader.