

All I'm saying, fellow opponents, is 'give Obama a chance' on Afghan strategy

by [Robert S. Siegel](#) on November 14, 2009

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The U.S. still does not have a strategy in Afghanistan, or at least President Obama has not announced that strategy. Further, amidst the controversy over the Administration's delay's in Afghanistan came word yesterday that the accused mastermind of the 9/11 conspiracy, [Khalid Sheikh Mohammed](#) and four others thought to be tied to the attack will be tried in a U.S. civilian court.

The U.S. needs to advance its strategy for security against terrorism to meet the growing capabilities of terrorists, and to meet the unpleasant reality that our nation will always be in a war on terror. We will never truly 'defeat' terror in a world where a lone fanatic with a gun or truck of fertilizer can be a terrorist – see Nidal Hassan, the Washington D.C. sniper, Terry McVeigh. Therefore we need a strategy that protects the nation while managing our resources, limiting the loss of life among our troops, and protecting our troops from exhaustion.

The U.S. needs to use the learning from the past eight years to create a vision for securing the U.S. in the future. What is an idealized vision of anti-terror security in 2020 and how do we get there? We have attempted to instill democracy in Afghanistan only to find that endemic corruption may be a bigger barrier than the Taliban. The Taliban, all but defeated, has revived in the region. And let's not forget that while our military forces our strained and our troops exhausted other threats around the world continue to develop (i.e. North Korea). These facts tell me it is now time to revise our security strategy. It may be that the President that promised Change will deliver quality Change with a new, breakthrough strategy that meets these challenges. He needs to. He created huge expectations by delaying, then sending his advisors back to rethink their proposals.

If all this produces is a variation of more of the same he will have failed the nation.

The war on terror has also been a battle between Democrats and Republicans since the first discussion of invading Iraq began. It is time to put politics aside and give the President a chance to do his job. The President's opponents, and I include myself in this, need to put politics aside and consider the nation's security first. The President needs to do the same.

Peggy Noonan of the Wall Street Journal writes of the President taking his time, "[I cannot see why this is bad](#). If he's really thinking." Noonan goes on to say that if it is true the President is not involving Republicans in the decision process that is bad. "The opposition is full of patriots who wish their country well." The President that promised to reach across the aisle continues to hurt his credibility by what Noonan says is "something in this president that resists really including the opposition."

There is no question that the nation needs to update its approach. [Cato Institute Senior Fellow Doug Bandow said in a podcast](#) that America should, "give up the notion that we can create a Western liberal society in Afghanistan. We can't." Bandow sites the endemic corruption in Afghanistan and lack of legitimacy of the Karzai regime among Afghans to support his view.

[Megan McArdle](#) brings in the sunken costs fallacy to bear in the Afghan decision. The sunken costs fallacy is economic speak for the logic of not spending resources on a problem because you want to salvage the

resources you have already invested. Those costs are sunken, or lost. Resource decision, or this case treasure and American lives, need to be based on the future cost and benefits not on what has already been lost. "That's very hard for most people to do, so I respect the fact that Barack Obama seems to be willing go there. He may be wrong about the war's winnability. But he's thinking about the problem the right way," McArdle explained.

Based on President's record to date opponents are certainly justified in doubting that this President can deliver on the enormous challenge that is the war on terror; that he can meet the nation's security needs. But for those of us that hold the nation's security above politics, now is the time to give the President the opportunity to give us Change that We the People can all believe in.