

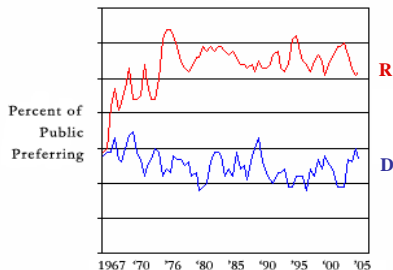
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Progressives and National Security: Challenges and Opportunities

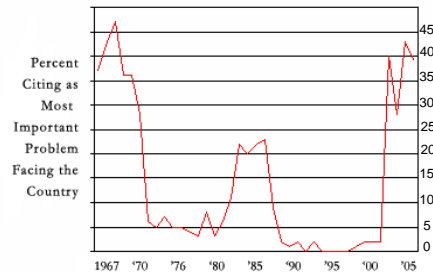
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**Progressives have faced a 20-40
point gap on national security
since 1968.**

Party More Trusted on National Security Issues, 1967-2005



Prominence of National Security Issues on Public Agenda, 1967-2005



Polling compiled by Loren Griffith "What Went Wrong." Truman National Security Project, May 2005

**...and every time national security was one of the top 3
issues for the electorate, progressives lost elections.**

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Now, we face a moment of historic opportunity. For the first time since 1968, the security gap is closing.

Which Party is Better On...

National Security
Republicans: 43%
Democrats: 41%

The Economy
Republicans: 34%
Democrats: 50%

The War on Terror
Republicans: 41%
Democrats: 41%

The Situation in Iraq
Republicans: 37%
Democrats: 47%

The Situation in Afghanistan
Republicans: 32%
Democrats: 44%

Democracy Corps/Greenberg Quinlan Rosner May 2009

But public opinion will also grow more fickle as more people shift from Rs and Ds to Independents.

The proportion of Independent voters is at its highest in 70 years

Independents: 39%
Republicans: 22% (-4% since December 2008)
Democrats: 33% (-6% since December 2008)

Independents are between Republicans and Democrats on assertive and muscular foreign policy—but lean towards Democrats—i.e.:

“The best way to ensure peace is through military strength”

Independents: 53%
Republicans: 75%
Democrats: 43%

Pew polling, April 2009

Meanwhile, progressives still have real Achilles' heels: decisiveness/force, patriotism, & military.

Which party do you associate with 'too hesitant to use force'?

Democrat 59%
Republican 21%
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner polling July 2008

Which party do you associate with "patriotic"?

Republican 45%
Democrat 28%
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner polling May 2009

Do you think Democrats or Republicans will do better at ensuring a strong military?

Republican 53%
Democrat 35%
Democracy Corps, May 2009

#1 reason you think Democrats are weak on security?

"They follow the polls/change position based on public opinion" 33% margin
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner polling July 2008

In spite of the more favorable political climate, wild cards can shift public opinion very quickly

- Another terrorist attack—esp. if connected to Guantanamo closing
- Increased violence as we withdraw from Iraq
- Growing violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Iran gaining a nuclear bomb
- North Korean brinkmanship
- Economic Recession
- A Member of Congress riding an issue (i.e. Tom Tancredo & immigration)
- Etc...

Any of these could push public opinion back to where it was. The shift is not solid, and it largely reflects public distraction with the economy, public confidence in progressive security

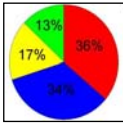
And we still have several critical misperceptions to overcome

Perception that progressives are hesitant to use force when necessary – this is about decisiveness and as well as the willingness to consider force



Perception that progressives do not support the military

Perception that progressives lack patriotism.



Perception that progressives lead from polls, not convictions.

To solidify the positive trends and prevent a return to that 20-40 point gap, we must **COMMUNICATE BETTER!**

- National Security communication is not about policy. It's about character.
- Researchers have shown that people reduce complex policy matters to a question of personal values.
- This is especially true of national security, which triggers fear and other unpleasant emotions.
- So don't start with policy! Until you connect with people's emotions and values, policy will go in one ear and out the other.
- You must connect to your audience and then lead to your policy ideas. We call this strategy:

CONNECT AND LEAD

You start
in a hole



Americans have a long-standing distrust of progressives on security.

Assume you start in the hole – that your audience is inclined to distrust you, so you must win their trust.

CONNECT to
Values/Emotions



Connect to the emotions and values of your audience, with a personal story if possible.

Demonstrate your commitment to keeping America safe.

LEAD
to Policy



Once you have won the trust of your audience, then you can lead to your policy ideas.

Couch your ideas in stories, metaphors, and images.

What values do we connect to? The core of ideas that unite 80% of progressives:



- **Our military is crucial to deterring and meeting threats; though many of today's threats can't be solved by the military (climate change, disease, etc)**
- **Allies increase our power – we want to unite our friends and divide our enemies**
- **Living our ideals and being respected by the world strengthens our power**
- **Development, democracy, and human rights lead to a more stable world**

We must also connect with values that resonate with all Americans, regardless of political leaning



- Acknowledge that **there are bad people in the world** who deserve punishment.
- Make it clear that we want to **keep America/our communities safe**.
- Show our belief that **America is a good country**.

When you CONNECT AND LEAD use stories, metaphors, and images

Stories: Personal stories are memorable, and they give you the aura of credibility and sincerity. Think of Obama's 2004 speech at the Democratic National Convention.



Metaphors: The world is complicated – metaphors cut through the complications. For example, if you want to talk about energy, don't drone on about supply and demand. "America is addicted to oil, and the buyer hardly has leverage over the dealer" is a message that's concrete, clear, and easy to remember.

Images: It's easy to remember something you can visualize. For example, if you want to advocate using diplomacy before going to war, say: "It's better to try the doorknob before knocking down the door." It also sounds like common sense.

**We'll never convince everyone,
so the goal is to persuade the
SENSIBLE CENTER**

We aren't looking to convince Americans on the further reaches of the left or the right.

We're aiming to convince most progressives, most independents, and a handful of conservatives.

Forty years of negative stereotyping leaves us with a major hill to climb.

But we now have an historic opportunity to **CONNECT** with the American people and **LEAD** our nation to a safer, better future.

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Challenges and Opportunities*