

THE SOLUTION TO THE IRAN "PROBLEM" IS IN PAKISTAN

My question to Mark Warner has begun to attract more attention, though some of the treatment of the question seems to miss the point. But in the interest of clarification, I wanted to explain my thinking in more detail.

As a recap, at the blogger's chat after Mark Warner spoke, I challenged the Governor's assertion that Iran was the biggest WMD threat right now. I asked how he could argue that Iran was a bigger WMD threat than Pakistan, when Pakistan was tremendously unstable and, if Musharraf fell, Al Qaeda could have the bomb within weeks. Whereas Mohammed el-Baradei had just declared that Iran didn't have the bomb (that last bit was natasha's contribution). I pointed out that experts had described Pakistan as being similar to Iran in 1978. Only this Iran of 1978 already had the bomb.

Warner responded just about the way I think most candidates would respond (though I have heard Kerry speak very intelligently on this subject). He gave three or four real reasons why Iran was a threat, though none of them had anything to do with nukes. In short, he boxed himself into the same unsustainable logic for intervention that Bush used with the Iraq war—declare something a nuclear threat, when really he meant that it was a different kind of threat. In so doing, Bush and Warner both shut off some of the most effective solutions for the real, non-nuclear threat. (And for the record, I do think Iran is a bigger threat now than Iraq was in 2003, though that is thanks in part to our failed war in Iraq and our consequently ballooning debt.)

My goal with this question to Warner was simply to get him to think with more nuance about Iran. But I'd go further still. I'd say the best focus

of efforts right now is Pakistan, not Iran (beyond maybe opening up diplomatic relations Iran). Until we begin to address the Pakistan problem we're never going to address the real threat in Iran or anywhere else the Neocons want to move their playground. Here's why.