

Obama Stuck between Wars on Iraq, Afghanistan

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REPORT](#)

It was extraordinarily questionable why U.S. President Barak Obama chose not to credit the War on Afghanistan with a separate paragraph in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 23, to “note” the war on Iraq with only a four – line paragraph, and instead to escalate his war of words on Iran, as if the expansion of the war on Afghanistan into Pakistan was not enough over-depletion of an already exhausted U.S. human, financial and military resources, and as if a threat of a third war in the Middle East would serve in any way the U.S. vital interests in the region or contribute to U.S. elusive victory in either one of both wars. Downplaying the most pressing items on the U.S. agenda and leaping forward to the nuclear issue and Iran was only a thinly – veiled attempt to divert attention away from the fact that Obama was stuck between the worse and the worst in both countries.

On the second anniversary of Blackwater’s massacre of Iraqis in Baghdad’s Al-Nusur Square, CBS on this September 17 asked in a detailed report: “Why Is Obama Still Using Blackwater?” The answer could obviously be found in exhausting the U.S. “volunteer” military manpower stretched out to the maximum to sustain the two U.S. – led wars on Iraq and Afghanistan.

This military manpower debacle leaves Obama with either one of three options: More privatization of both wars and consequently more “blackwaters”, “nationalization” of both wars through “Iraqization” and “Afghanization”, which nonetheless could not disengage the U.S. neither militarily nor financially from both theaters neither in the short term nor in the foreseeable future, or resorting to conscription to sustain a war that has so far proved unwinnable both on Iraq and on Afghanistan after nine years and seven years respectively.

However all three options seem unfeasible. Conscription as the last resort is absolutely an option that would immediately be dismissed because unless it is dictated by a clear-cut threat to national security it will not be accepted as an indispensable measure of self defense, let alone conscribing Americans for a war on Iraq that has been unpopular with them since the U.S. – led invasion in 2003, or for the war on Afghanistan that is increasingly becoming unpopular among them, according to the latest CNN Poll of Polls (58% against), and is gradually eroding Obama’s popularity, which dropped to 50% from 57% in July (Wall Street Journal and NBC News poll on September 23).

The other two options, namely privatization or nationalization of both wars, are evidently contradictory. While Iraqis or Afghanis may swallow a delayed withdrawal of foreign military troops until they can develop their own defense forces, they will in no way accept a mercenary alternative to such troops in the meantime, nor would they perceive

collaborators who were brought into both countries by the invading armies themselves as turned “nationalists” overnight.

Obama’s strategy as was announced on the inauguration of his administration was to exit U.S. combatants from Iraq and move these same combating resources to Afghanistan to solve his military manpower problem, but exit from Iraq is proving untenable and the war on Afghanistan is proving unsustainable without immediate commitment of substantially more troops.

Obama has now to choose between two failures, either a failure in Iraq or a failure in Afghanistan, because a “successful outcome” in the latter theater “is going to require a major U.S. reinforcement,” but “fast redeployment in Afghanistan hurts us in Iraq. It comes at a price ... at the cost of the risk of failure in another theater (i.e. Iraq),” according to Stephen Biddle, a senior fellow with the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) for defense policy on March 2.

Obama is now obviously stuck between what he described as the U.S “war of choice” on Iraq and the U.S. “war of necessity” on Afghanistan, which practically has become His “war of hard choice” – according to Richard Haas, the CFR president in a recent article. Both wars however are still insistently sustained by Obama whose exit strategy from both is still blurred in Iraqi and Afghani eyes as much as in U.S. eyes.

Viewed from the battle grounds of the U.S. global wars on terrorism or otherwise, which ironically are only fought in the Middle East, Obama’s strategies seem indecisive and confused. On Iraq, he pledged in his UN speech to “ending the war” and “to remove all American troops by the end of 2011,” but “responsibly,” until the Iraqis “transition to full responsibility for their future,” which practically translates to a long term strategic commitment.

Meanwhile on Afghanistan he is still wavering and meandering not to rush to a sizeable reinforcement to avoid what Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. and NATO commander in country, warned against in a confidential report, recently leaked: “Resources will not win this war, but under-resourcing could lose it .. The overall effort is deteriorating. We run the risk of strategic defeat.” But Obama will not yet surge troops there until he has “the right strategy” and will not send “young men and women into battle, without having absolute clarity about what the strategy is going to be.”

Nine months in office, Obama is still wondering: “Are we doing the right thing?” “Are we pursuing the right strategy?” If Obama has yet to decide on a strategy on Afghanistan, in hindsight, one might ask: why did he send there seventeen thousand additional troops earlier this year!

For too long now the Middle East has been paying in blood for U.S. experimental and contradictory foreign policies, which ostensibly seek peace where war is the only option to make the Israeli occupying power, for instance, succumb to a just and lasting peace in the Palestinian – Israeli conflict, and launch war where peace is only attainable through an end to U.S. – led wars as the cases are in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, Obama at the UN on Wednesday seemed poised to promise the Middle East more of the same when he pledged he “will never apologize” for defending the interests “of my nation,” and yet lamented “anti-Americanism,” which is exacerbated by sustaining such counterproductive policies.

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