

# President Obama Faces Iraqi Conundrum

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Obama has nothing to be proud of when it comes to his Middle East policy. One failure after another everywhere you look, it starts to get really eerie. With Libya, Egypt, Syria failures behind, Iraq adds to the list. The US has always sided with those who started unrest while Saudi Arabia was pouring fuel of fire pursuing the dream of using terrorists as a tool for turning the Arab world into the Wahhabi safe haven.

The Wahhabi formations used the US support while operating in Syria. Now they are back to Iraq to capture a major part of the territory. As Dick Cheney admitted the United States gave the Middle East away to terrorists who can do as they please and impose their ways on others to the heart's content. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant emerged in Syria supported by the United States. Now having suffered a defeat in its fight against Damascus, the militants made a U-turn to threaten Baghdad. The Iraq shaped by the United States within its present borders is facing the threat of elimination.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) has already declared the establishment of caliphate and called on the jihadists throughout the whole world to pledge allegiance. The Iraqi Sunni Muslims opposed to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, former military from the Saddam Hussein armed forces and small terrorist groups joined the Islamic State movement. It's easy to guess what is in store for Iraqi Shiites in case the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant comes to power in the country – another story of mass genocide will become a burning issue of contemporary history. The Sunni radicals don't make a secret of their plans which include the elimination of Shiite shrines and execution of Shia preachers. The Iraqi Shiites are supported by Iran; if the war intensifies the Iranian involvement becomes an option. As of now, Tehran believes Iraq needs no boots on the ground – neither US, nor Iranian.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will not send armed forces to fight against Takfiri terrorists in Iraq but will help Baghdad if it demands military equipment, a high-rankling diplomat says. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks during a visit to Moscow where he held talk with Russian officials on June 1. "If Iraq ever requires our arms for an effective combat against terrorism, we will provide these arms in accordance with international law and our bilateral contracts," he said. Although Iraq has a strong army, Iran is ready to send military consultants to the neighboring country to help with battles against the al-Qaeda splinter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Amir-Abdollahian noted.

Until recently Washington had supported the tough policy towards the Iraqi Sunni Muslims and initiated the persecutions of former supporters and functionaries of the Saddam Hussein's regime. The late ruler still has many followers filling the ranks of staunch opposition to the incumbent government. The United States is putting the blame for the

goings-on on Prime Minister of Iraq, the one they installed in power and who did not quite meet the expectations. The pro-Iranian foreign policy of the Shiite – dominated government is the major irritant. According to the United States plans, chaos, civil war, the division of the country – all told these factors will put a stop to Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement. That's how Tehran interprets the US reaction to the events in Iraq as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant started its offensive. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei makes no bones about it saying the enemies of Arab's resurrection try to use others to pour fuel on the war in the Middle East and make Sunni and Shia Muslims clash. Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri, deputy joint chief of staff of the armed forces and a senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) officer, told Iran's al

Alam television that Iran's response to the militias would be "certain and serious". Jazayeri's remarks late on Saturday did not provide details on the assistance Iran could give Baghdad, beyond saying Iran could help with what he called popular defence and intelligence. "Iran has told Iraqi officials it is ready to provide them with our successful experiments in popular all-around defence, the same winning strategy used in Syria to put the terrorists on the defensive... This same strategy is now taking shape in Iraq – mobilizing masses of all ethnic groups," he told the television station. "A response is certain and serious," he said. "With Syria, too, we announced we would not allow terrorists in the hire of foreign intelligence services to rule and dictate to Syrian people. We will certainly have the same approach with Iraq."

The remarks came as Iraqi helicopter gunships struck suspected insurgent positions in Tikrit on June 28 as part of a government offensive to retake the northern city from Sunni jihadists led by ISIL (ISIS), residents and officials said. No doubt Iran will defend its borders and Shia holy shrines of Najaf and Karbala. The battle will decide the outcome of the conflict. Tehran will not hold talks with extremists; the preparations are in full swing to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Iran enjoys solid support inside Iraq. Maliki is not the key figure. The man Iran really relies on is Ayatollah Ali al-Husain al-Sistani, the highest-ranking Shia marja in Iraq and the leader of the Yawza of Najaf, an Iranian citizen. He is the one who has clout. The Ayatollah has already called on the Iraqi Shiites to repel the Islamic State offensive. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards will work as instructors to train Shiite volunteers' formations. Perhaps al-Maliki will manage to cope without Americans relying on the Shiite volunteer units and Iranian military aid. It will make Baghdad even more anti-US.

The US will hardly get any geopolitical dividends playing a game of its own without taking the other states' interests into consideration. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov believes that not just the US and UK, but all of the region's countries should participate in dealing with the Iraqi crisis. If Iraq collapses it could destabilize the entire Middle East and the adjacent regions, with unrest lasting for years, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on June 28. "If Iraq collapses – and considering that Libya has almost collapsed already, and someone apparently wants Syria to share a similar fate – the whole region would simply explode and unrest would become its dominant feature. And it would affect not just the Middle East and Northern Africa, but the adjacent regions as well," Lavrov said. "We urge others to make conclusions out of what happened in Iraq, Libya and Yemen – the countries where not all of the problems were dealt with. The country's unity is still being severely tested. It's not London and Washington that should make the decisions, like it was in Iraq in 2003, but all of the region's countries, all of the neighbors of Iraq," Lavrov said.

Only those in the Middle East who have avoided an outright US involvement managed to

stay stable. The Central Intelligence Agency's analysts predict that with Iraq collapsed, Afghanistan is next. The United States appears not to understand what it does. On the one hand they are ready to follow the advice of Saudi Arabia to keep away from the Iraqi turmoil and shy away from cooperation with Iran. On the other hand, the White House still does not fully realize what dire fallout the collapse of Iraq may entail. Israel is also pushing the Obama administration from support of Iraqi integrity.

Shimon Peres made a probe when he said a Kurdish state has de-facto been established. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also declared his support of the idea to create an independent Kurdish state in the northern part of Iraq. The borders and political system of such a state could to great extent influence the events in the region. The Kurds living in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran make up the largest ethnos in the world without a state of its own. Actually the Iraqi Kurdistan is an independent canton while Iraq appears to be moving to a confederate state. Iraqi Kurdistan is oil rich. It's the sixth largest reserve in the world. It was reported a few days

ago the first tanker with oil bought in Iraqi Kurdistan dropped anchor in an Israeli port. Iraq believes the oil is stolen. The Kurds face difficulties with customers. Israel and Kurdistan have common interests running counter to goal of preserving united Iraq.

Obviously the creation of independent Kurdistan will entail international problems. No way will Turkey, Iran and Syria reconcile with the idea of getting their Kurdish enclaves separated making them parts of another state. The emergence of independent Kurdistan may pose a security threat to the statehood of these countries. Tehran believes getting out of Baghdad's control may make Kurdistan a springboard to be used by Israel to deliver military strikes against Iran. The Iranian Kurdish population exceeds by 2-3 million the number of Kurds living in Iraq. The West has always been interested in using the Kurdish factor as leverage against the government of Iran.

Barack Obama said the United States will take steps to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. He never made precise what kind of measures he means. Till the White House is blowing hot and cold, the extremists are taking advantage of the situation. They can do away with Iraq, the United States will reap no benefits and the Middle East will face the horrible fallout plunging the region into dire straits of political turmoil.

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