GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

# US Elections: The Iraq Factor

By Ramzy Baroud
Global Research, February 15, 2008
15 February 2008

Region: USA
In-depth Report: IRAQ REPORT

As the race for the United States presidential nominations progresses, the stances of and attitudes towards both Republican and Democratic candidates continue to bring up causes for concern, in terms of their past behaviour, current appeal and general trustworthiness.

Republican Mitt Romney's exit has practically assured Senator John McCain's victory in his party. While we might expect McCain's narrow-mindedness and pro-war rhetoric to make him an uncontested darling of conservatives, the doubts that remain about his credibility — and the seemingly absurd accusations by some that he is more liberal than Democratic liberals — highlight two disturbing trends.

The first is the extent of the moral corruption among many Republicans that would enable viewing McCain as a liberal. Then again it might be a fair assessment in the context of Armageddon enthusiast, Mike Huckabee, surpassing expectations on Super Tuesday. The rise of the former Arkansas governor — highlighting the growing power of fundamentalist evangelical Christians — should have been picked up as an alarming trend by Americans, but the media was largely unmoved.

The second is that making such comparisons between McCain and Democratic nominees doesn't necessarily point to a lack of judgement in characters. Clinton's hawkish foreign policy views would indeed qualify her as a faithful follower of the warmongering policies of Bush himself.

On the Democratic side, Super Tuesday only served to confirm Barack Obama's recent gains. After the vote count, Clinton, who was previously seen as the uncontested frontrunner was now conceivably the underdog. True, the numbers of delegates' votes garnered by both nominees is too close to place either on top, but Obama's speed in squashing Clinton's lead in national polls and his fundraising ability should be a cause for great concern in the Clinton camp.

Naturally, as both nominees will vie for as many votes as possible in the next round, charm and charisma alone can no longer suffice. The sizeable dilemma is that Obama and Clinton elections programmes are in many ways only superficially different.

Both nominees claim to be establishment nominees. Clinton appeals to an older generation by virtue of her "experience". Obama appeals to the impressionable young, who have been taught political correctness early in life, and who are eager for new language and a new approach.

Obama's record is certainly more honourable than Clinton's. His genuine involvement in community activism at a young age and his anti-war stance during his Senate years point at

a certain degree of moral clarity, a rare quality in Washington indeed.

But both nominees walk a very fine line. Aside from the Iraq issue — Obama voted against the war while Clinton voted for it — the remaining differences are not significant enough to be exploited by either to guarantee the decisive victory needed before the August Democratic Convention. If neither have enough votes to become the uncontested nominee, the party's more influential delegates — the super-delegates — will have the final say, a worst-case scenario that could compromise the very democratic nature of the entire process.

There is a good chance that both candidates will avoid an all-out war over issues that are significant concerns for most Americans. While race and gender are supposedly defining issues for most voters, the fact that Clinton is a woman, and Obama is African-American does not mean they represent the interests of their respective group. Moreover, neither Obama wishes to be defined solely by his colour nor Clinton by her gender.

The Iraq war will most likely define President Bush's legacy. Moreover, once the presidential candidates for both parties are determined, the war will probably position itself as the lead point of contention. Senator McCain is already gearing up for the anticipated fight over war with the democrats. In Norfolk, Virginia, he attacked Obama and Clinton for wanting to set dates for withdrawal from Iraq. "I believe that would have catastrophic consequences. I believe that Al-Qaeda would trumpet to the world that they had defeated the United States of America, and I believe that therefore they would try to follow us home."

McCain — presumably a "war hero" — realises that the disastrous Iraq war is most likely to be his campaign's weak point, and the faltering economy will not divert attention from it. In fact, in the minds of many Americans, both issues are linked. According to an Associated Press-Ipsos poll after Super Tuesday, the majority of Americans believe that the best way to escape recession is to pull out of Iraq.

If the Iraq debate has indeed emerged as the most significant in coming months, the chances are Obama will have the upper hand. But Obama's anti-war stance has become a source of concern to Israel, whose "pro-Israel" camp in the US remains too significant to overlook. Justin Elliot, writing for Mother Jones, discussed Obama's challenges in putting that group at ease. After all the man is black, his middle name is "Hussein" and has a few "slips" of a tongue on his record — notwithstanding his statement last March that "no one has suffered more than the Palestinian people," which he grossly reinterpreted later.

MJ Rosenberg of the Israel Policy Forum, a dovish advocacy group, told Elliot, "the more right-wing segments of the Jewish community are the least likely to be comfortable with an African-American president."

To prove them wrong, Obama sent a letter to the US ambassador at the Security Council demanding that the council "should clearly and unequivocally condemn the rocket attacks against Israel… If it cannot… I urge you to ensure that it does not speak at all." He also claimed to understand why Israel was "forced" to impose a siege on Gaza, a siege that human rights organisations have held responsible for causing mass starvation and unparalleled catastrophe.

What's important about Obama's dramatic shift is that he has proven to be just as self-serving and easily manipulated as the rest. If he can so readily support the starvation of 1.5

million people, who is to guarantee that he will not renounce his moral stances on issues pertaining to Iraq, Iran, and indeed America itself?

*-Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is an author and editor of PalestineChronicle.com. His work has been published in many newspapers and journals worldwide. His latest book is The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle (Pluto Press, London).*

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © Ramzy Baroud, Global Research, 2008

---

**Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page**

**Become a Member of Global Research**

*Articles by:* Ramzy Baroud

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca