

# Joe Biden's record on US wars

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Global Research, August 29, 2008

Press TV, Tehran 29 August 2008

Region: [USA](#)

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Barack Obama's choice of Joe Biden for his running mate presents a reassuring face to those concerned about Obama's relative naivety. What is tragic for the antiwar movement is that Biden's long years as a Washington foreign policy insider reflect deep-rooted support for US military intervention to achieve geopolitical aims.

## IRAQ

Unlike Barack Obama, Biden supported Republicans in holding that Iraq posed both "a long term threat and a short term threat" to the United States. Biden was reminded of the statement in an interview last year, long after the disinformation on Iraqi WMD had come to light. He replied, "that's right, and I was correct about that."

Biden, along with most Democrats, also voted in favor of the war funding bill in May 2007. At the time, Biden was himself running for president and criticized Obama for voting against the bill. Biden tried to hedge his bets, saying he "didn't like" the bill he had just voted for, effectively saying he had voted for a bill he didn't agree with.

Since the botched invasion and the subsequent pains of occupation, Biden has been an advocate of the fatally flawed "three-state solution" which Iraqis have criticized as a recipe for wars over borders, resources and multicultural cities like Baghdad and Kirkuk.

## AFGHANISTAN

Borrowing the terminology of the Bush administration, Biden advocates what he calls a "strategic surge" in Afghanistan. "We need more troops-but not many" and "the right kind of troops," Biden said, echoing Barack Obama's criticism of Iraq as a "dumb" war.

His military hardware want list for the Afghan project reads like a Lockheed Martin promotional catalogue. Biden believes that US forces need "more fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters for mobility, more surveillance drones, more satellite tasking, more [armored vehicles] for troop protection."

Years on the CFR have not gone to waste in developing in Biden a high-handedness well suited to the US military-industrial complex, "the Afghans are patient people, but they're not seeing an effort worthy of a superpower."

## IRAN

On Iran, Biden is equivocal. In line with mainstream American opinion, he is opposed to Iran's nuclear program but vague on the military option. Though refusing to rule it out,

Biden has called it a “bad option” – reminiscent of the Iraq war funding bill which Biden voted for but “didn’t like.”

In perhaps the only foreign policy issue which clearly differentiates him from the Republicans, Biden has said that talking about regime change has, “accelerated [Iran’s] efforts to get the bomb”.

But Biden’s foreign policy expertise didn’t extend to knowledge of Iran’s cultural make-up. “America needs to show the Arab world that we’re not bent on its destruction,” he declared in 2001. Iranians are Persians, not Arabs.

## ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Just like Obama with his speeches to AIPAC and the Knesset, Joe Biden has passed the initiation rite into the highest reaches of US politics by giving his unequivocal support to Israel.

“I am a Zionist. You don’t have to be a Jew to be a Zionist,” Biden told Israel’s Shalom TV in 2007. In the same interview, Biden gave a stark justification of supporting Israel in terms of economising on the US military presence in the Middle East.

“Imagine our circumstance in the world were there no Israel. How many battleships would there be? How many troops would be stationed?” he asked.

In other remarks, Biden has said Palestinians have to accept Israel’s refusal on the right of return for Palestinian refugees, saying that this would “destroy the Jewish nature of the [Israeli] state.” Balancing this, he also said that Israel would have to dismantle “most” of its settlements in the occupied territories.

Barack Obama’s Iraq war pullout smokescreen gave him a critical edge in his defeat of Hillary Clinton. The danger now is that Joe Biden’s long years serving the Senate Council on Foreign Relations blur the truth of his consistent support for US wars.

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