



Style Over Substance In Obama's Iraq Speech

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He said what he had to say. He read his Teleprompter well and without stumbling. He lined up all the used-to-death clichés in an orderly line. And that was all there was to the president's nationally televised address on Tuesday night.

We haven't left peace and success behind in Iraq. We've left a fiasco of a failure. For more than five months the president and his administration have signally desisted from knocking together the heads of the Iraqi politicians who still haven't been able to even form the pretense of a new national government. Bombings in Iraq and fatalities from them are accelerating to a level not seen since before Gen. David Petraeus launched the surge strategy in January 2007.

And as for the withdrawal of all combat troops from Iraq that the speech applauded, that was all smoke and mirrors too. In a rare embarrassing fact that he allowed to intrude into his rhetoric, the president admitted that 50,000 Americans are staying in Iraq. He didn't specify what they will be doing there, but rest assured, they are all now prospective targets for Al Qaeda, the rising Shiite militias and the force to really watch -- Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army.

Of course the president nowhere talked about why it made more sense to commit scores of thousands of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, a country without any serious strategic significance or major resources whatsoever, while stripping them from Iraq, which for all the mess he and his predecessors made of it, at least has the second largest reserves of easily accessible, high quality oil on earth.

But facts have never got in the way for Barack Obama before and they didn't on Tuesday night.

The speech while mercifully much shorter, was otherwise just a random reassembling of all the vacuous phrases about "better future," "historic moment" "lasting peace and long-term prosperity." And all of that was only in the second paragraph. There was less hot gas in the Hindenburg.

One got the eerie impression that the president's many speechwriters didn't even write a word of it. They just set a random software program to extract the necessary uplifting phrases from his 2008 campaign rhetoric and run 20 minutes of them together in no apparent order. We've heard it all before, and as our domestic economy collapses, and what's left of security in Iraq and Afghanistan disintegrates, we'll hear it all again.

But let's leave the last word to St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them ... and they shall not escape."

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