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**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY  
AND TRANSATLANTIC  
RELATIONS AFTER THE  
U.S. ELECTIONS**

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Supporters at Barack Obama's election  
night rally in Chicago (IL),  
4 November (Photo: Corbis/B. Kraft)



# Editorial

## *2008: A Transatlantic Perspective*

Among the many crises this year two events have attracted major attention from analysts of international relations. The first one was the Russian-Georgian violent conflict in August and the second one the election of Barack Obama as the next President of the United States. Both events are incomparable and have different ramifications for world affairs. What both have in common, though, is that they directly affect general European security issues and, in particular, NATO.

The short but violent crisis in Georgia can be seen as the result of a longer development in Russian foreign policy. The new self-assured stance of the Russian leaders was made possible by apparently unlimited availability of energy resources. Gas and oil are the new nuclear weapons, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov once stated. In Prime-Minister Vladimir Putin's view the changing balance in world affairs, towards a perceived multi-polar system, will be to Russia's advantage. The Russian proposal of July this year for a new European security order underlines this predilection. This European order has no place for the U.S., confirming a continuity with former Soviet policies. Many observers fear less predictability from Russia's leadership as a consequence.

This stance from the biggest eastern neighbour confronts the Alliance with a number of difficult questions. In particular it affects two policy fields that NATO has developed since the end of the Cold War. The first one concerns enlargement and the second one transformation.

Enlargement has enabled NATO to add to further stabilisation and pacification of Central Europe and the Balkans, areas that were characterised for a long time by unrest and instability. The enlargement process, in conjunction with EU enlargement, has radically changed the picture. This is not to say that Kant's era of perpetual peace has finally arrived, but it is a big step forward compared to earlier times. The question is how to proceed with enlargement policies in view of the stronger Russian protest against giving MAP status to countries outside core Europe, e.g. Georgia and Ukraine.

Recently an American analyst stated that the Bucharest Summit compromise text on the two countries has sent the wrong signals in all directions. Whether true or not, it is obvious that those countries bordering the Russian Federation and which have the intention to ally themselves with NATO will be under fire for some time to come. This has given rise to the question whether Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty needs to be reconsidered and reconfirmed, i.e. whether the

military deterrence of NATO has not eroded as a consequence of the transformation process that many members have undergone since the 1990s. Since then the territorial defence capabilities in many countries have been replaced by quick mobile reaction forces. The demand for a reinforcement of NATO's territorial defence forces with heavy land forces seems exaggerated, however, since there is currently no credible conventional force threat to any European member of the Alliance. What could be considered, though, is a strengthening of the Allied infrastructure in Central Europe to accommodate quick deployment forces. The political dialogue on MAP status for countries adjacent to the Russian Federation needs to be continued. While it can still be argued that stable and democratic states adjacent to Russian borders are also in Russia's security interests, previously used arguments that e.g. Ukraine's membership is indirectly in Russia's interest is at present difficult to sell in the post-Georgia circumstances. It seems realistic to assume that there are no quick diplomatic fixes available.

The election of Barack Obama as the new President of the USA is this year's second major event in transatlantic relations. It seems that with his election a new start can be made in European-American relations, notwithstanding the fact that relations across the Atlantic saw considerable improvement during the second Bush Administration. It is now on Obama's shoulders, and on that of his European colleagues, to work out the many issues on the common transatlantic agenda. In the field of security the upcoming NATO summit in April next year is an obvious occasion to once again confirm, in addition to its security mission, the political essence of NATO, implying common policies, mutual understanding and fair burden-sharing among its members. The confirmation of a communality of security interests in particular seems an important but difficult task ahead. Not least because of events surrounding the start of the Iraq conflict, unity of thought and policies among the member states has been seriously questioned. A major issue will be whether the Alliance will be able to enhance political coherence. The foreseen Declaration on Alliance Security for the summit meeting, symbolically co-located in France and Germany, is intended to do just that: to underline that all members of the Alliance underwrite a common purpose of NATO.

Bram Boxhoorn  
December 2008



# American Foreign Policy and Transatlantic Relations

*After the 2008 United States Elections*

On 4 November 2008, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama was elected the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. With 53 per cent of popular votes, and 365 Electoral College votes, President-elect Obama has a strong mandate to govern the most powerful country in the world. Simultaneously, the Democratic Party secured a majority in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate.

What does this mean for American foreign and security policy? What are President-elect Obama's policy priorities, and what is his vision of the relationship with Europe? *Atlantisch Perspectief* invited Democratic strategist and advocate Damon Porter and conservative Matt Mayer, who served two Republican administrations, to comment on Mr. Obama's historic election.

Strategic adviser and commentator Marco Vicenzino outlines the president-elect's packed foreign policy agenda as Mr. Obama prepares to enter the White House on 20 January 2009. Stanley Sloan, scholar and consultant, undertakes an evaluation of George W. Bush's foreign and security policy during his eight-year tenure as president, and reflects on the outgoing administration's legacy. Has it been all bad news?



Let's get to work. President-elect Barack Obama meets General David Petraeus, Commander of U.S. Central Command, in Iraq, July 2008 (Photo: U.S. Air Force/P. Villanueva II)

# A Change Has Come

## *Believing in the Transatlantic Relationship*

Damon S. Porter

*There've been times that I've thought I couldn't last for long  
But now I think I'm able to carry on  
It's been a long time coming  
But I know a change is gonna come*<sup>1</sup>

Sam Cooke, *A Change Is Gonna Come. Ain't That Good News*, 21 December 1963

*It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day,  
in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.*<sup>2</sup>

Barack Obama, *election night victory speech Grant Park, Chicago (IL)*, 4 November 2008

Election night confirmed to all – as popular votes were tallied and electoral votes awarded – what the prognosticators predicted, the candidates promised and the voters expected: a change is coming. To be sure, Barack Obama represents the ultimate in change for the United States; throughout our history the tangle of race and politics created a legacy of civil and voting rights inequality that disenfranchised generations of Americans from enjoying the full blessings of liberty. Those old enough to remember an America divided in every way on the basis of race and those who are the beneficiaries of the Civil Rights Movement together witnessed a moment many believed would not happen in their lifetime.

Although Barack Obama's landslide victory represents a symbolic change, voters were also just as interested in something even more significant than history in the making. Voters recognised that the change Obama's campaign promised and the change his presidency must deliver is a fundamental change in policy that departs from the policies of the last eight years.

### The Transatlantic Relationship

Such a promised change in policy has far-reaching ramifications for Europe, too. Policies over the last eight years have placed a heavy burden on what had otherwise been a strong and stable relationship between the United States and Europe throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From cooperation in two world wars, through economic downturns and recoveries, this relationship has grown through mutual respect and from an understanding that together both sides of the Atlantic are stronger than they are in isolation.

During the Bush Administration the relationship between the United States and Europe has been strained at best. Unlike the typical 'honeymoon' period that many incoming presidents enjoy with their European partners, President Bush demonstrated quickly his desire to go it alone, taking unilateral policy positions that demonstrated little concern for other states. Within the first 100 days after taking office, President Bush withdrew U.S. support for the Kyoto Protocol over loud protests from Europe and Asia. While the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 created a momentary sense of unity and a pause in this developing tension, any goodwill or willingness to collaborate was lost by 2003 and the lead-up to the Iraq war. Both sides of the Atlantic took acrimonious postures, whose high intensity was measured by a *Pew Global Attitudes Project* survey: by 2007, 66 percent of German citizens, 60 percent of Spanish and French citizens, and 42 percent of British citizens had an unfavorable opinion of the United States. While Europe experienced political change of its own during the Bush years (in France Chirac to Sarkozy,



in Britain Blair to Brown, in Italy Prodi to Berlusconi, and in Germany Schroeder to Merkel), President Bush remained the central figure of opposition for most Europeans.

The expectation for real change is high outside the United States as well since the decisions made in the Oval Office create a ripple effect heard and felt around the world. The reaction to events during the Bush Administration makes the case for our global interconnectedness. No part of the world has been impervious to the impact of international terrorism, financial instability, the HIV/AIDS crisis, climate change, and energy dependence, to name a few. The reaction of the United States to these important issues has been consistently indicative of the willingness of the Bush Administration to adhere to a neo-conservative, unilateral ideology. Such policies have served only to isolate the United States, straining its relationship with Europe.

European attitudes toward President Bush do not, however, indicate a sense of anti-Americanism in Europe. Indeed, part of the promise inherent in the Obama campaign is that despite the damage the relationship sustained in the early part of this century, the two sides can regain trust and a sense of common purpose. European response to Obama demonstrates this promise. In contrast to President Bush, Barack Obama has been widely popular in Europe. He first began grabbing the attention of Europe after his surprise win in the first presidential primary contest. His victory in the Iowa caucus proved

that he was a viable candidate with broad-based appeal, a fact supported by his winning a state that is 97 per cent white. The victory catapulted Obama over his Democratic rivals, making his name more popular in Europe.

The reach of 'Obamamania' was apparent on his visit to Europe during the presidential campaign. Obama's trip marked only the third time he traveled across the Atlantic since winning election to the United States Senate. From the beginning of his presidential campaign to its conclusion, Barack Obama provided the clearest distinction from the policies of the Bush Administration, and while foreign leaders may not have known Barack Obama personally, they knew what his vision for the world would be as president: the best alternative to the Bush Administration's *status quo*. Obama was the only candidate from either party to oppose the Iraq war and to call for a timetable for troop withdrawal. This early stance against the policy that defined the entire Bush presidency gave Obama the opportunity to connect with disaffected voters across demographic, political, and continental lines.

Echoing themes of transatlantic solidarity first promised by Presidents Kennedy and Reagan during the Cold War era, Obama signaled his desire to repair the alliance in preparation for a new set of challenges. In his speech at the Victory Column in Berlin, Obama acknowledged the misperceptions held by Americans of Europeans and Europeans of Americans, but also reminded his audience that success for both was rooted in continued cooperation. The cooperation Obama alluded to in remarks given in Europe and upon his return to the United States goes beyond Iraq war policy. He has taken a tough stance against nuclear proliferation in Iran but also stressed the need for dialogue with 'rogue states' including Iran, Syria, North Korea and others. He has called for greater assistance with European central banks to bring liquidity into financial markets and alleviate a greater downturn in the global economy. These positions, policies and speeches had a tangible influence on Europeans: by Election Day in the United States, according to a survey conducted by the *Pew Global Attitudes Project*, out of 24,000 Europeans in 24 countries surveyed the overwhelming choice for president was Barack Obama. Moreover, the volume of support for Obama demonstrates clearly that the strong relationship enjoyed across the Atlantic is certainly repairable.

By no means will such a repair be easy. The challenge for President Obama is essentially the same both domestically and internationally. For America, he must work to unify a nation divided equally among Republicans and Democrats in order to find the political strength to effectively address the growing healthcare crisis, to provide incentives to retain and grow jobs which pay a living wage, to deal with the growing infrastructure needs across the country, and to make college more affordable.

For Europe, he must unify a divided transatlantic relationship and

restore a multilateral approach to global policy since this approach will benefit both partners. The relationship between the United States and Europe will determine how effectively many of the most pressing issues facing the United States and the world are addressed. Obama will need a strong partnership with Europe to determine objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to stabilise that region and to reduce terrorist cells. Multilateral discussions with Europe will assist Obama in creating policies that reduce global dependence on fossil fuels, restore confidence in a troubled global economy, and ease the growing global recession. Europe has an important role to play in determining a strategy for dealing with North Korea and Iran as well. Clearly, the promise of an Obama administration means strengthening the strategic and longstanding partnership between the United States and Europe; this partnership is critical to success on these issues and many more.

While it is impossible to predict how the Obama Administration will pursue rebuilding trust and partnership with Europe, there are examples from his administration transition that offer insight into how President Obama will approach the transatlantic relationship. Recognising that as Commander-in-Chief and 'chief executive officer' of the United States he will be confronted immediately with a wide range of pressing issues, Obama moved quickly to establish a transition with substance as well as style. Where previous changes from one administration to another have been reduced to formal photo opportunities and prepared statements, Obama has been receiving daily intelligence briefings, remaining in close contact with President Bush and his senior national security and economic teams, assembling members of his own cabinet and holding press conferences to keep the public informed. While this contrast from the Hoover

– Roosevelt, Carter – Reagan and Bush – Clinton transitions implies recognition that the world is interconnected by 24-hour cable news and global markets, it also reflects Barack Obama's personality and governance style.

Obama's cabinet choices demonstrate his willingness to reach out to rivals and across the aisle. Not content to surround himself with like-minded thinkers, Obama has asked Hillary Clinton to join his administration and has signaled his desire to retain Defense Secretary Robert Gates. Both Clinton and Gates have espoused a desire to increase diplomatic efforts and to reduce unilateral actions. Not only do these positions reveal a return to the transatlantic relationships of the past, but these cabinet appointments also lend insight into Obama's style of leading. Obama clearly sees healthy discussion and disparate points

of view as necessary aspects of the decision-making process. Both sides of the Atlantic should take heart in this willingness to solicit the opinion of others, no matter their political leanings, since this return to multilateral decision-making can only benefit the partnership that exists between the United States and Europe.

## A New Direction for America

While Obama is willing to work with out-going and remaining administration figures, he has also declared his intent to reverse hundreds of administrative actions and executive orders taken by the Bush Administration. Inherent in this declaration is Obama's acknowledgment that the unilateral policies of the past cannot continue; they cannot even be allowed to stand. Surely Obama's stance indicates a day to come when the United States and Europe can once more enjoy the partnership forged over the generations.

Barack Obama forged a powerful and successful 'political melting pot' during the campaign, closing the gaps between races, genders, classes, regions, and religions. His core theme of "Yes, We Can!" resonated with Americans seeking to get beyond partisan politics and to work collectively for the common good of the country – and the global community. The call to service and a higher purpose for government has been compared to John F. Kennedy's, most notably by the Kennedy family. Barack Obama was able to transcend campaign rhetoric, energising a disillusioned electorate frustrated with combative politics. He inspired those who had been unwilling in past elections to engage in a way not seen since the call to service of the 1960s. Surely Obama's call to his fellow Americans signals a return to a sense of multilateral, global community.

*Obama's election  
was a moment many  
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happen in their  
lifetime*

Damon Shelby Porter was a Marshall Memorial Fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States (2006). He served two Speakers of the Missouri House of Representatives as Chief of Staff, Special Counsel and Legislative Director. He has also been Assistant Attorney General of Missouri. He was a delegate to the Missouri Democratic Convention during the last three presidential election cycles.

Would you like to react? Mail to [info@atlcom.nl](mailto:info@atlcom.nl).

1. S. Cooke, *A Change Is Gonna Come. Ain't That Good News* (record), Los Angeles: RCA Victor, 21 December 1963. Though not widely popular at the time of its release, this recording has become synonymous with the Civil Rights Movement and an 'anthem' within the African American community.
2. B. Obama, election night victory speech in Grant Park, Chicago (Illinois), 4 November 2008.



F16s fly over 1,000 Air Force officers who have just graduated (Colorado, May 2008) (Photo: U.S. Air Force/M. Kaplan)



# Obama's Victory Must Be Bigger than the Moment

Matt A. Mayer

For most Americans, Senator Barack Obama's election victory signifies a powerful step forward in America's never-ending quest to reach what Abraham Lincoln referred to as the Standard Maxim: the Declaration of Independence's revolutionary statement that "all men are created equal". From the rare tears of a friend's war-hardened father to the bedtime conversation between a parent and a child that for the first time ends with the confident truth that "you can even be the president of the United States", the moment carries much meaning. Americans from across the political spectrum should take time to acknowledge this important moment in history.

Europeans also found Obama and his message of hope and unity appealing. They see in him a return to a vibrant transatlantic alliance. We should celebrate that convergence of opinions. The strength of our relationship remains vital to global peace and prosperity.

## There Is Much Work to Do

Yet, given the unacceptably high level of illegitimate births, incarceration rates, and dropout rates among black Americans, we still have much work to do to strip away the remaining vestiges of slavery. It was only a short three years ago that we saw in graphic detail how America had failed to do right by those living in the shadows of the slave trade, mere blocks from where men, women, and children were once torn apart from each other and sold like livestock.

In Europe, millions of Muslims live on the edges of society where jobs are scarce and disillusionment is plentiful. From the *banlieue* of Paris to the Turkish neighbourhoods of Berlin, scores of sons and daughters of Muslim immigrants straddle two separate worlds – not quite European for Europeans, but too European for Muslims.

Yes, we have much to celebrate, but the moment of reflection and celebration will quickly pass – as it always does. Many problems remain.

In our rush to move beyond the presidency of George W. Bush, we have glossed over vital issues that confront us. We must move beyond the simplistic analyses of Obama's victory. Yes, Americans, including many conservatives, are eager to turn the page on President Bush and his policies. Yes, Americans are hopeful that Obama will bring positive change to Washington. Yes, Americans are hopeful that Obama will reach across the aisle to solve America's toughest challenges. Yes, Europeans are breathing a collective sigh of relief that the Bush presidency has come to an end. Yes, Europeans are excited that someone interested in Europe won the presidency.

Obama's election triumph brings with it complex challenges. As many wise politicians have observed, winning is easy, but governing is hard.

While Obama can continue to blame President Bush and Republicans in 2009, by the mid-term elections in 2010, that dog won't hunt anymore. He will have had two years to put in place his agenda. If the financial crisis worsens in 2009 and 2010, Obama will not be able to escape responsibility as President Franklin Roosevelt did when the Great Depression worsened under his policies. History is now firmly recorded by non-traditional media sources that can marshal the facts and figures, post them on the Internet, and watch the mainstream media play catch-up. Campaigns can withhold information from the blogosphere, avoid press conferences, and hide behind a complicit media. Presidents do not have that luxury.

## Obama: No Uniter

For many voters, Obama's historically thin résumé and lifelong affiliation with the radical left prevented them from taking him at his word. He promised big ideas, but, in his twelve years as a legislator, did not achieve any big ideas. He promised bipartisanship, yet he rarely has reached across the aisle. In fact, the non-partisan *National Journal* judged his voting record as the U.S. Senate's most liberal. He promised to fight special interests, yet he has never bucked the left's special interest groups on any issues. In his book *Dreams from my Father*, Obama referred to his time in the private sector as a "spy behind enemy lines". Uniter's don't talk that way.

When you add in his various affiliations – some closer than others, but all more than mere acquaintances – with individuals wholly outside the mainstream, the Obama of the campaign seems illusory. From firebrand preachers Jeremiah Wright and Michael Phleger to the unrepentant terrorist William Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn, and Rashid Khalidi to convicted swindler Tony Rezko, little about Obama indicates that he truly will be a uniting force.

The early signs are not very positive. His first appointment took the form of partisan Rahm Emanuel who devoted the last four years to the singular aim of defeating Republican House members. In his first press conference just three days after his triumphant victory, he decided to pick on Nancy Reagan, the 87-year-old widow of one of America's greatest presidents, by erroneously attributing to her the séance practices of Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Clinton. Only left-wing partisans pick on Nancy.

Then, in his first meeting with the opposition, his staff broke with tradition and leaked false information about his and President Bush's private discussions to gain a political advantage on the bailout request of America's inefficient and over-unionised automobile industry. He promised a break with the past, but many of his first appointments are former Clinton staffers. These actions seem like more of the same sharp elbows and zero-sum gamesmanship than the post-partisan Shangri La Obama promised us. Even if he wants to act moderately, will a Democrat-controlled Congress and the interest groups on the left that helped him get elected let him?

## Obama's Fiscal Policy: Inequitable

For still other Americans, the echo of the Obama campaign's scurrilous charge that those uninterested in paying an even greater share

of federal taxes were "unpatriotic" and "selfish" still rings loudly. Substantively, while the top 25 per cent (those making more than 69,000 U.S. dollars) received a greater share of income over the last decade, they also paid a greater share of federal income taxes. In fact, the top 25 per cent receive roughly 68 per cent of all income, but pay 85 per cent of all federal income taxes.

More problematic is the impact Obama's tax plan will have on job-creating small businesses. As a small business owner myself, my business income over the last two years has been less than the 250,000 dollars tax target. Yet, my business income gets merged with my wife's salary for tax purposes. Collectively, we exceed the tax target. My ability to expand my business will be directly affected by having to pay more taxes. This wrinkle is what Obama exploited to claim that he was not going to raise taxes on most small businesses. Technically, he isn't, as most small businesses have income under 250,000 dollars, but by raising rates on those families who collectively make over 250,000, many small businesses will get hit with the ratchet effect.

Procedurally, Obama's goal that the top 25 per cent pay an even greater share of federal income taxes poses a fundamental dilemma for Americans. With more than half of Americans already receiving a transfer payment from the federal government, Obama would drive a greater number of Americans – roughly half – off the federal income tax rolls. Disconnecting a majority of voters who receive goods and services from the cost of those goods and services is simply bad public policy. The majority will care little how much things cost, as they are not paying for it. Accountability in government will become an increasingly meaningless concept.

As Scottish philosopher Alexander Tytler is credited with observing:

A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse due to loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship.

Obama aims his tax policy directly at this divide. He consciously promises the majority benefit after benefit and then says to those individuals who pay very little of the burden of those benefits that those selfish Americans in the top 25 per cent will pay more. He hastens the 'tyranny of the majority'.

America faces massive challenges ahead. Those challenges will be costly. From restoring trust in our financial markets to rebuilding its critical infrastructure to reforming the cornerstone entitlement programmes of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, the impending liabilities are far in excess of expected tax receipts. Something must give.

*What if Obama  
is just another  
doctrinaire,  
partisan liberal?*



The 'rich' can only pay the remaining 15 per cent of taxes at relatively lower rates before the federal government must increase the tax rates to levels not seen since the 1970s to pay for the growing cost of federal spending. When that happens, the economy will slow even more. Yet, the majority will demand what is 'owed' them. At that point, whether it happens in five or 50 years, the fine line between dependence and bondage will fade into a semantic blur.

Looking across the Atlantic, it is hard not to see the tyranny of the majority already ensconced in some European countries. A week does not seem to pass without a trade union strike, a protest over labour laws, or continued sclerotic employment and economic growth. Even in the expansion of the European Union (EU) to former Eastern Block countries, EU members except Britain and Ireland ensured that the majority were protected by banning the free flow of labour from the East and the free flow of capital to the East.

Obama's opposition to NAFTA and other free trade proposals seems similarly protectionist, which stunts economic growth. Obama's support for greater unionisation comes as European countries seek to weaken the trade unions due to the restrictions they place on job creation and prosperity. Obama looks to Europe's social programmes as Europe tries desperately to reduce their cost. Economic vitality is not a winner-take-all game. Though separated by an ocean, America and Europe are intertwined. A weak America means a weak Europe.

For the lower classes in America and Europe, weak economies make it that much harder to find a job and escape the dependency of government. For Europe, an unemployed and disenfranchised Muslim population is fertile ground for the seeds of radicalism to be planted and grow. Given that many of the terrorists that have acted in Europe are homegrown, domestic radicalisation is a real and growing threat. With the free flow of travel between the United States and Europe, it impacts all of us.

### And What about his Foreign Policy?

Our security rests in the balance on what Obama will do as president. While we can all agree that the war in Iraq was poorly led by the Bush Administration, few can argue against the fact that the war in Afghanistan has, at a minimum, kept al-Qaeda on the run and limited in its planning capability. With all of his domestic promises to keep, Obama, like the previous two Democrat administrations, will seek to cut defence spending to pay for those promises.

With a collapsing Afghanistan, unstable Pakistan, resurgent Russia, nuclear North Korea, near-nuclear Iran, chaotic Somalia, unresolved Israeli-Palestinian question, and still eager al-Qaeda, not to mention the real aim of the Chinese, the world remains fraught with diplomatic and potentially military challenges. We can ill-afford another defence peace dividend. It is always easy to stand on the sidelines and point

out the problems with the other guy's actions. It is much harder actually to solve the problems. As we have seen, presidents come and go, but the world remains a dangerous place.

The reality is that European opposition to President Bush was easy given that most Europeans did not like him. Most Europeans are wildly enthusiastic about Obama – far more so than Americans. How will European leaders oppose Obama when he takes actions they do not like? From agricultural subsidies to energy and environment to the role of NATO to the next unknown unknowns that occur, are European countries presuming that Obama will not take action with which they do not agree? That seems naïve. Even friends have disagreements. He will be more protective of subsidies to Iowa farmers – they launched his presidency. Toss-up states need coal economically to rebuild. With required defence cuts, he will need more military support from NATO members.

So, how will Europe work differently with Obama? As most European leaders know, the rhetoric for public consumption often times did not match the reality of cooperation between us.

### Obama: An Example to All...

With Obama's historic election, America once again has led the way in the world in breaking down the barriers for the disenfranchised. After all, there is little chance that a member of a minority group will be elected prime minister or chancellor anywhere in Europe. Perhaps Obama will inspire the Germans to rally behind the son of a Turkish guest worker, or the French to rally behind the daughter of an Algerian transplant, or the British to rally behind the son of a Pakistani immigrant, or the Dutch to rally behind the daughter of a Somali refugee. Wouldn't it be great for Europe for one of them to become a leader in Europe so that the millions of Muslims living there truly could feel welcome?

History shouldn't just happen in America.

During the campaign, Obama referred to himself as a Rorschach test, meaning that individuals see in him something about themselves. Perhaps he was right. Regardless of your politics, Obama's story has bits and pieces that fit the biographies of millions of Americans and Europeans. He is the son of a non-American. He is the son of a bi-racial couple. He is the son of a single parent. He moved around a lot as a child. He has stepsiblings. He is married with two children. He has traveled the world. He is the archetype of the American Dream. He has gone from welfare to the middle class to the upper class. He has lived among the disenfranchised and the elites of society.

### ... Or Another Disappointment?

But, as Sigmund Freud once said, sometime a cigar is just a cigar. What if Obama is just another doctrinaire, partisan liberal who believes in bigger government, stronger unions, more regulation, higher taxes, evil corporations, and mostly soft power? His scant track record and his associations contain little evidence he is anything other than that.

For the sake of long-term American economic strength and security, as well as that of Europe, we must all hope that what those who voted or cheered for Obama saw in him was more than a pseudoscientific inkblot test of their own yearnings or more than an historic moment in time. We must hope that they saw a man who will break from his own past and truly make history – not just in being elected, but also in doing great things.

Moments pass. Great men are defined by what they do, not by what they say they will do. It is the done deed that endures.

Matt A. Mayer is the CEO & President of Provisum Strategies LLC and an Adjunct Professor of International Studies at The Ohio State University. He served two Republican administrations: that of President George W. Bush and Governor Bill Owens of Colorado. He was an American Marshall Memorial Fellow with The German Marshall Fund of the United States.

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# Barack Obama and Foreign Policy

## *The New President's Agenda*

Marco Vicenzino

By winning over 50 per cent of the popular vote, President-elect Barack Obama has a popular mandate to govern, but in order to unify the United States and its position abroad he must govern from the center of the American political spectrum. After its longest and first billion dollar election, an exhausted nation needs more pragmatism with results and less ideological warfare. President-elect Obama must deliver on what the electorate wants: real reconciliation, not one masked by masterful rhetoric. It is essential to avoid politically divisive issues and focus on consensus-building initiatives that concern most, if not all, Americans – principally the economy and American leadership in the world.

In the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, President-elect Obama cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of his two immediate predecessors. President Clinton's initial inexperience and attempt to govern from the left led to the Democrats' loss of the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. Despite President Bush's victory by the narrowest of margins, he governed as if he had a popular mandate. Eight years later his winner-take-all approach to politics, together with his party's complacency, corruption scandals and deviation from core principles have relegated Republicans to the political wilderness for a significant time.

President-elect Obama's initial appointments do point to pragmatism but many critics, including some of his staunchest supporters from the grass-roots of the Democratic party, are disappointed by the large number of Clintonians who will occupy cabinet positions, including Mrs. Clinton herself as secretary of state. Mr. Obama runs the risk of forming a government with his image but former President Clinton's imprint. Some may conclude that the Clintons lost the presidency but won the White House. Throughout the campaign Mr. Obama reminded Americans about the need for change and that a vote for McCain was four more years of Bush. The flip-side could be that a vote for Obama may amount to another four years of Clinton, minus all the scandals. With the campaign over, it is now important to distinguish between the hope for change and the reality of power, which many Obama supporters are finding difficult to digest.

### U.S. Foreign Policy

Overall, the 2008 election was void of real debate on foreign policy issues, with both candidates offering more rhetoric than substance. U.S. foreign policy now requires more realism and results and less rhetoric. The world today is marked by newly emerging geographical centers of power, particularly in the developing world, coupled by the rise of non-state actors (such as NGOs, multinational corporations, and terrorist groups) and newly emerging non-geographical centers of power, particularly virtual ones, such as the realm of cyberspace. Multi-tasking in a multi-centric world remains an absolute priority.

The comparisons between JFK and Obama are inevitable but the times are completely different. Today's threats are not just conventional but asymmetric and non-traditional. Few disagree on the need to upgrade America's image abroad but expectations may prove unrealistic, at least for the immediate future. Mr. Obama's international honeymoon is unlikely to last long and America's foreign policy challenges will, if anything, only grow more complex.

A key question throughout the campaign was Mr. Obama's preparedness in dealing with critical foreign policy challenges, but the *status quo* begs a broader question, that is, whether America possesses a foreign policy establishment able to deal with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Much of it still remains grounded in Cold War mode,



and many of its elite struggle to grasp contemporary realities. The Manichean black-and-white, us-versus-them approach is surprisingly prevalent across the political spectrum, much more than most would like to admit.

In the foreign policy realm, it is essential that President-elect Obama directly engage the American public and bridge the widening gap between elected officials and citizens. He must explain America's challenges analytically and not just rhetorically. For too long, politicians and media have underestimated the appetite and ability of ordinary Americans to participate in the foreign policy process. Simply put, it's time to move beyond campaign mode and encounter the foreign policy realities and challenges head on.

It is essential for the president-elect to consolidate and nurture existing relationships, particularly with European allies, and cultivate greater ties with new strategic partners, especially the emerging powers of the developing world. Forging better relations with states such as Turkey in the broader Middle East, Brazil in Latin America, South Africa and Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa, will strengthen U.S. interests abroad and are likely to leave a less visible footprint.

President-elect Obama's greatest challenges lie beyond the transatlantic relationship.

#### *China and India*

No U.S. president will effectively determine China's future, but a policy of constructive engagement will provide an opportunity to influence China's course, particularly by continuing to involve and lock China into the rules-based institutions that guarantee global stability. With respect to India, President-elect Obama must continue to expand upon the work of his predecessors, marked by President Clinton's opening to India and President Bush's consolidation of ties with the U.S.-India nuclear agreement.

#### *Russia*

A more pragmatic approach is required with Russia. Greater Russian self-confidence after its conflict with Georgia was quickly shattered by global economic realities, exposing a more sober view of the former superpower. Russian concern for its near abroad, primarily the areas comprising the former Soviet Union, must not be mistaken for global imperial ambitions. Russia can still cause mischief abroad through its seat at the UN Security Council and role as energy supplier to Europe, but its power remains somewhat limited within the grand scope of the world's current geopolitical landscape. It is important for Mr. Obama to understand these realities, but it is even more important not to give Russia a regional *carte blanche*.

### *Middle East*

With respect to Iran, much depends upon the results of Iran's presidential election in June 2009 and the willingness of the Supreme Leader to engage in serious talks to reduce tensions and reach an accord, perhaps a comprehensive agreement that will include the nuclear issue. Contrary to campaign rhetoric, the U.S. has been engaged with Iran over Iraq and to a lesser extent Afghanistan. On the nuclear issue, the U.S. has been in communication with Iran but within a multilateral context. The main decision for President-elect Obama is whether to develop a more public dialogue with the Iranian regime.

In Iraq, realities on the ground will ultimately determine if and when reduction of troops takes place. Reduction must be based on rational and pragmatic decision-making, together with U.S. military leaders and the Iraqi government, and must not be determined by political convenience and ideological conviction in the U.S.

On Israel-Palestine, the president-elect must not repeat the actions of his predecessors, Presidents Bush and Clinton, who both attempted to resolve a decades-old conflict in less than a year of their respective presidencies. President-elect Obama must use his new diplomatic capital to guide both sides toward a final agreement. Obviously, the outcome of Israel's election in early 2009 is crucial to this process as is dealing with the divisions in the Palestinian leadership. Since America plays an essential role in the resolution of this conflict and massive U.S. taxpayer dollars go to this region, the president-elect must engage ordinary Americans on this issue and explain clearly and unequivocally what's at stake for America and highlight the realities, needs and grievances of both Israelis and Palestinians.

### *Afghanistan and Pakistan*

Afghanistan not only requires a greater and more efficient allocation of U.S. and allied resources and troops, but also greater efforts directed toward convincing European publics of the importance of the international mission. No matter how committed certain European leaders may be, they are limited in what they can deliver without greater public support. President-elect Obama must use his new diplomatic capital and goodwill to convince all European leaders and more importantly, European publics to commit to a long-term presence in Afghanistan. Without such a commitment, ordinary Afghans will give up hope on the international mission, and the current problems plaguing Afghanistan will continue in a vicious downward spiral. Pro-active engagement to ensure greater transparency and accountability in Afghanistan's 2009 elections will provide Mr. Obama and European allies with an opportunity to publicly reaffirm their firm commitment and unequivocal support to ordinary Afghans.

The global economic turmoil has taken an enormous toll on Pakistan, further complicating its political and security challenges. Economic collapse in Pakistan must be avoided. German initiatives to this end must be actively supported.

### *Africa*

Mr. Bush's ability to make Africa a U.S. foreign policy priority should be greatly enhanced by Mr. Obama's personal ties to the region. Although the global economic turmoil has taken its toll on Africa, recent years have witnessed significant growth, particularly due to enormous Chinese investment. Greater access to international markets and lower tariffs on African agricultural products can improve the situation. Much of the effectiveness of international aid as well as Africa's future will be determined by the ability of Africans to assume more responsibility in combating endemic corruption.

### *Latin America*

Considering that Hispanics constitute America's largest minority and that Latin America borders the U.S., the region must be a priority for the new administration despite limited mention of it throughout the campaign. With the exception of Cuba and arguably Venezuela, democracy has flourished throughout the region over the past 15 years but economic progress is taking more time. U.S.-funded reform programmes, which receive scant media attention, have slowly

*Will the election  
of Obama amount  
to another four years  
of Clinton?*

yielded dividends over the years. They must be sustained and expanded as must relations with like-minded states in the region. President-elect Obama must work with other regional leaders to help enhance the role and profile of the under-resourced Organization of American States (OAS)

as a regional forum for the resolution of disputes and promotion of regional initiatives with collective benefit. For too long, the OAS has been limited in its ability to fulfil its potential, often due to national interests of member states. It's time to move beyond limited national interests and think in terms of overcoming collective hemispheric challenges. One initiative should be the formation of a rapid-reaction force to deal with the aftermath of natural disasters, principally in the Caribbean basin. Any diplomatic outreach to either Cuba or Venezuela must be done selectively. Dialogue for the sake of dialogue, particularly a public dialogue, without an agenda will amount to a headline and photo-op and can prove counterproductive in the long term. Private, off-the-record diplomatic engagement on issues of

mutual concern, such as drug interdiction, has existed for many years and must continue.

### In Conclusion

President-elect Obama is inheriting leadership of a global power facing immense internal and external challenges. He must seize this historic opportunity as president of all Americans to confront, with all Americans, these challenges in a spirit of cooperation at home and collaboration abroad.

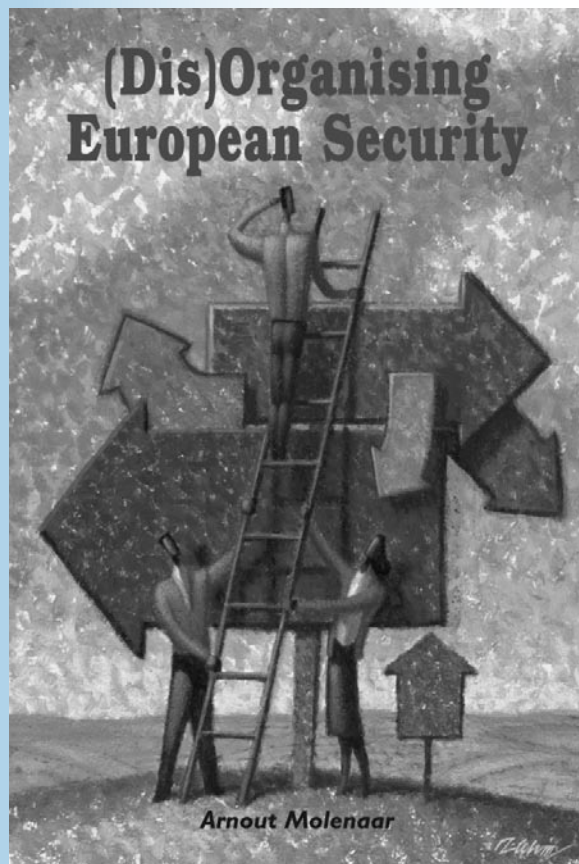
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# Failure, Success or Mixed Bag?

## *The Foreign and Security Policy Legacy of the George W. Bush Administration*

Stanley R. Sloan

Future historians, with the advantage of perspective that passing time brings, will undoubtedly revise what policy analysts and pundits write today about the foreign and security policy 'legacy' of the George W. Bush Administration.

Perhaps, with the advantage of hindsight and a lot of good luck, the legacy will include a stable, democratic Iraq at the center of a democratising Middle East. Perhaps it will include a defeated, or at least minimised, al-Qaeda, and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Possibly, the Israelis and Palestinians will have agreed on an equitable distribution of land and a peaceful, mutually-beneficial relationship, and will say that being left on their own by the first term of the Bush Administration gave them a sense of greater responsibility for their own destiny.

Perhaps the United States will once again provide a beacon of inspiration for democracies and would-be democracies around the world. Perhaps, with the Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons far in the rear-view mirror, the United States will once again be able to assume the mantle of wise, tempered moral leadership that has won it allies and international support in the past. And, the United States and Europe will have concluded that a stronger transatlantic relationship is in their interest.

Perhaps the strength and resilience of the American economy will have returned the United States to fiscal solvency and international economic and monetary leadership. Perhaps the American dollar will once again be seen as a strong and reliable currency.

Perhaps this and more will come true – but certainly not without more

effective future U.S. foreign and security policies and leadership than seen in the past eight years.

Some experts and observers have already attempted to project the Bush Administration's legacy in foreign affairs. There are few American assessments that could be called 'objective'. Most of these judgments were made in the context of the 2008 election campaign or in the politicised environment leading up to that campaign. Across the Atlantic, the European Union's Institute for Security Studies has published a substantial analysis by Marcin Zaborowski that evaluates the Bush legacy.<sup>1</sup>

'Conventional wisdom' is that the Bush foreign and security policy has largely been a failure, but commentators, particularly from the American right, and also some more centrist observers, highlight what they see as underappreciated successes. One respected American commentator, Fareed Zakaria, has acknowledged that the second Bush Administration spent a lot of time trying to repair damage done by the first, perhaps rescuing part of the Bush foreign policy legacy.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the case with U.S. policy toward Europe in particular.<sup>3</sup>

This essay looks at a variety of foreign and security policy issue areas which could be considered part of the Bush legacy. It draws on judgments already published on these areas and attempts to produce considered assessments on each one. The essential question that

defines 'success' or 'failure' is whether or not administration policies served U.S. interests. That, in itself, is a subjective question, and so the conclusions drawn here will not necessarily be the only legitimate way of evaluating the outcomes.

## Select Policy Areas

### *Homeland Security*

This is perhaps one of the main areas in which the Bush Administration can claim success: avoiding any further terrorist attacks on American soil following the 11 September 2001 attacks. As conservative commentator Helle Dale put it: "Mr. Bush was steadfast in the most important trust any president has, the safety of his citizens...", and this will be "... his essential legacy...".<sup>4</sup> Dale's perspective echoed that of David Frum, former Bush speechwriter and special assistant, who argued: "The U.S. homeland has enjoyed almost complete immunity from acts of international terrorism." Frum's bottom line is that "it would be absurd to attribute this improving trend line solely to President Bush. But it would be equally absurd to deny that things are improving."<sup>5</sup>

Edward Luttwak, a national security policy expert who has been critical of the Bush Administration's conduct of the Iraq war, argues that the Global War on Terror has succeeded in rolling back jihadism around the world.

Luttwak contends that global jihadi mobilisation that was intended to be stimulated by 9/11 "... was stopped before it could gain any momentum by all that Bush set in motion: the destruction of al Qaeda training bases in Afghanistan, the killing or capture of most of its operatives, and, most importantly, the conversion of Muslim governments from the support of jihad to its repression."<sup>6</sup>

On the downside, while the defenders of Bush justifiably point to the fact that the United States has remained 'safe' since 9/11, several sub-sets of the homeland security policy remain open for final judgment. These include, for example: the fact that Osama bin Laden has not been killed or captured, and Afghanistan not stabilised; the costs to America's moral image created by Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and other war-related events; the question of whether the war in Iraq produced more recruits for al-Qaeda than it eliminated; and, on the domestic front, the extent to which the Patriot Act undermined the

rights and freedoms of American citizens. One could also question whether American soldiers sent off to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan were kept 'safe' by their president, given the questionable legitimacy of the Iraq war and under-resourcing of the Afghanistan mission. Also, the long-term safety and well-being of the American people may have been compromised by Bush Administration policies which have mortgaged America's future to overseas creditors and stretched the U.S. military beyond its limits. The bottom line is a near-term success, but perhaps with longer-term costs.

### *Afghanistan*

Supporters of President Bush are correct to argue that the Administration's initial actions in response to the 9/11 attacks succeeded in removing the Taliban from power and denying al-Qaeda access to the bases in Afghanistan where many of the 9/11 perpetrators had trained. However, few observers – Republicans or Democrats – argue that Bush's policy toward Afghanistan has been a success. U.S. and allied operations in Afghanistan have so far failed to capture bin Laden and, more importantly, failed to get Afghanistan on the track toward stability and democracy. The Bush Administration has pointed to limited success toward stabilisation and democratisation, but the effort has been undermined by the shortage of military forces and financial resources needed to 'win the peace' there.

Moreover, the initial U.S. approach to ownership of the campaign in Afghanistan, at first rejecting a role for allies and NATO, also left the United States largely holding the bag when additional resources were needed, even though European and other allies have joined in the stabilisation effort. The general view is that the resources required for the war in Iraq prevented the United States from the level of effort that would have been required to pursue its declared objectives in Afghanistan. Marcin Zaborowski's bottom line is that "after initial successes, the situation in Afghanistan has sharply deteriorated".<sup>7</sup>

Zakaria argues that the Administration has made enlightened changes in its Afghanistan policies, welcoming the military and non-military role of allies and devoting increasing aid to reconstruction and equipping the Afghan army. But the costs of the earlier failures have not yet been offset, and the challenge has been intensified by the ability of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters and leadership to sustain safe havens, support and training centers across the border in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Particularly because the Afghan operation has been seriously under-resourced in all areas, Bush Administration policy cannot be judged a success.

### *The Iraq War and Spreading Democracy in the Middle East*

Conventional wisdom on the Iraq war judges this to be perhaps the most serious foreign and security policy failure of the Bush Administration. The original rationale for the U.S. invasion of Iraq has been

*Perhaps the U.S.  
will once again be  
an inspiration for  
democracies around  
the world*



shown to have been riddled with manufactured intelligence, misleading presidential justifications, excessive optimism regarding prospects for success, and bad management. The course of the conflict until recently suffered from the mistakes made at the outset. In particular, the failure to heed professional military judgments about the number of troops required to win the war and then stabilise Iraq was a costly error, in terms of human (U.S., allied, and Iraqi) life and U.S. national treasure.

Fareed Zakaria agrees with this judgment on the war and its conduct through 2005, but then notes that the second Bush term saw some significant improvements in Iraq strategy and tactics. He acknowledges that many of the “gruesome realities of Iraq” cannot be reversed, but credits the second Bush Administration as having “moved in the right direction”. Zaborowski, for his part, concludes that Iraq now appears to have a chance of “... reaching some level of normalcy in the future”. “However,” he observes, “this is a far cry from the vision of a stable, prosperous and democratic Iraq that the Bush Administration had promised in the run-up to the war.”<sup>8</sup>

Defenders of the Bush legacy accept that mistakes were made, and acknowledge that major costs have been paid for those mistakes. However, they argue, the jury should remain out on the final verdict. David Frum suggests that in the long run the war will be seen not as similar to the “debacle of Vietnam”, but more like the “frustrat-

ing Korean conflict, or the Philippine insurrection...”<sup>9</sup>. Helle Dale argues that prospects for a democratic wave sweeping over the Middle East are not high, but depend on the outcome in Iraq. Should Iraq continue on a positive path, it could have “transformational consequences” for the region. On the other hand, Dale suggests that “if Iraq fails, possibly because a President Obama disengages prematurely, there will be little to show for the Bush legacy in the Middle East”<sup>10</sup>, admitting the possibility of failure but placing potential blame on President-elect Obama.

On the bottom line, the Iraq war has entailed huge costs for the United States in every way imaginable. Whether there will be a long-term reward for U.S. interests remains open to question.

#### *Middle East Peace*

The initial policy of the Bush Administration was to leave the Arab-Israeli conflict and its settlement to the Israelis and Palestinians. This ‘hands off’ policy, instigated in part to differentiate the Bush approach from the active engagement the Clinton Administration had pursued, essentially cleared the way for both sides to act in ways that moved them further away from any kind of peaceful settlement. One could reasonably argue that this relationship is so intractable that a more activist Bush Administration policy would also have failed. However, even the Administration itself seems to have decided that

the policy was wrong-headed, and shifted gears toward the end of its term. Unfortunately, the initial policy failed and the change came way too late. Further progress toward a Middle East peace will have to wait for Israel's political situation to clarify and for the Obama Administration to shape its policies in light of the evolving situation in Israel and among the Palestinians.

### *Iran, North Korea, and Non-proliferation*

Iran and North Korea were, along with Iraq, part of the 'axis of evil', as defined by George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address. As such, they became important parts of the Administration's foreign and security policy package. George Bush's legacy in this area appears today as a mixed bag.

Policy toward Iran has not achieved key American objectives. The Administration's initial approach of confrontation versus negotiation generally failed to arrest Iran's progress toward becoming a nuclear weapons state, and seemed only to intensify Iran's radical tendencies. The removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq was desirable for many purposes, but also removed Iraq as a balance to Iran's influence in the region. The Administration fell into the trap of dealing with Iran as if the current radical leadership represented all that Iran is and will be for all time. This approach denied the Administration the possibility of appealing to Iran's legitimate national interests and playing on potential divisions inside Iranian society and its governing class. The Administration's wise move toward a more complex strategy in its second term, and its cautious embrace of talks with Teheran, came too late to produce meaningful results.

With regard to North Korea, the Administration can claim some success. Initial policy was to lump North Korea together with Iraq and Iran in the axis of evil. However, when it became clear that the international community had failed to prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear weapons state, the Administration joined in cooperative international efforts to talk and buy North Korea out of its nuclear programme decisions. As opposed to Iran and Iraq, where the Administration resisted negotiations, Korea's strategic position (including, importantly, the ability to devastate *with non-nuclear weapons* South Korea's capital Seoul as well as U.S. troops defending South Korea's border) made negotiations a more attractive option. The result was significant progress in convincing the North Korean regime to move away from nuclear weapons capabilities in return for much-needed international financial assistance. This policy change has been

*The second Bush Administration spent a lot of time repairing damage done by the first*



derided by conservative hard-line critics of the Administration, most notably John Bolton, who had served as Bush's ambassador to the United Nations.<sup>11</sup> While Bolton and other conservatives might consider the Administration's shift on Korea as "capitulation", most centrist observers would see it as more consistent with U.S. interests and capabilities than the approaches preferred by the hard-liners.

### *India and Pakistan*

This policy area also can be seen as a mixed bag. The Bush Administration solidified the U.S. relationship with India with new deals to share nuclear materials, and to intensify the sale of military equipment to India as well as conduct joint military maneuvers. In fact, David Frum argues that among the most important 'crucial decisions' of the Bush Administration will be "... the formation of a U.S.-India alliance".<sup>12</sup> 'Alliance' may be too strong a word, but the Administration did succeed in strengthening the U.S. strategic relationship with this important emerging power.

At the end of the Bush Administration, Pakistan, however, ends up being a part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. The Bush Administration actively pursued a close relationship with Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf as a key ally in the War on Terror. The Administration had little choice but to cooperate with Musharraf given Pakistan's lawless common border areas with Afghanistan, possession of nuclear weapons, and the great potential for Pakistan, willingly or unwillingly, to become the next host for radical Islamic terrorists. When Musharraf was forced out of office, new relationships had to be established with the democratic regime that succeeded Musharraf's autocratic rule, in the wake of the perception that the Bush Administration had helped prolong Musharraf's rule.





Now, most experts believe that the Afghan problem is in fact an Afghani/Pakistani problem, and that the goal of stabilising Afghanistan will require a regional approach that involves talks with moderate Taliban elements as well as continued military efforts to control al-Qaeda and radical Taliban elements which currently enjoy safe haven in Pakistan. The Obama Administration now must solidify cooperation with the new Pakistani government, support Pakistani efforts to establish some control over the tribal areas which now harbour the Taliban and al-Qaeda, while managing the sensitive issue of U.S. and NATO attacks on targets across the border in Pakistan.

### *China*

U.S. policy toward China during the Bush Administration may also be seen as relatively successful. David Frum credits the Administration with “continuing to manage” the relationship successfully. China policy has for some time now required a finely tuned balance among a great variety of U.S. interests, including strategic concerns, military balance issues, defence of Taiwan, human rights positions, and growing financial and economic ties. Frum argues that the Administration wisely improved ties with all countries on China’s periphery in case things go sour with China, and concludes that “Bush is bequeathing to his successor an Asian strategic environment much friendlier to the United States than the one he inherited”.<sup>13</sup>

In this policy area, Bush’s policy shift arrived quite early in his Administration. Bush came to the presidency having described China as a “competitor” during the campaign, to differentiate his approach from the ‘strategic partnership’ language that had been used by the Clinton Administration. Following the early 2001 crisis over the Chinese downing of an American reconnaissance aircraft, the Bush Administration

began to deal with China more as a ‘partner’ than a ‘competitor’. At the end of the Bush Administration’s term, China remains a huge strategic question mark for the future. But the Administration did ‘manage’ the relationship successfully, and, for better or worse, presided over a period in which U.S. purchases of Chinese products and China’s willingness to hold huge quantities of American financial paper created a mutual interdependency between the two countries, that will require cooperative management in future years.

### *Russia*

Perhaps the main criticism of Bush Administration policy toward Russia should be that it was initially naïve, based on President Bush’s instinctive feeling that his first meeting with the Russian president in June 2001 had revealed Putin’s “soul”, providing a solid basis for a cooperative relationship. That judgment did not reflect the reality that, at home in Russia, Putin was slowly but surely laying the foundation for a more autocratic, less democratic regime, imposing controls on a free press and limiting the potential for serious political opposition. It also did not reflect the fact that the United States and Russia had some serious policy differences, particularly about further NATO enlargement, deployment of anti-missile defence systems in East/Central Europe, and over Russia’s inclination to use its energy supply role as a source of political leverage in Europe.

This seeming naïveté was all the more surprising in that Bush’s then National Security Adviser and present Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, was trained as an expert on the Soviet Union. However, the fact was that Russia had become less important in the American foreign and security policy equation. Also, there were areas of common concern. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Russia joined much of the

world in rallying behind the United States. And, in spite of Russia's opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Russia cooperated in the international community's attempt to keep Iran from going nuclear.

The bottom line is that, as in its China policy, the Bush Administration successfully managed the relationship with Russia, keeping issues between the two countries from leading to a major crisis in relations. This remained the case even when Moscow decided to invade Georgia to help separate the provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgian control. The United States protested, and continued to insist that Georgia and Ukraine would one day become NATO members, but both sides chose not to allow the incident to break 'normal' U.S.-Russian relations. In the United States, the Administration's handling of the relationship with Russia undoubtedly has been viewed more favourably than in Europe, where virtually every Bush Administration policy affecting Europe has been viewed with, at a minimum, skepticism.

### *Africa*

Bush Administration policy toward Africa is arguably the area most widely applauded as a success. One typical report early in 2008 suggested that Africa was a "bright spot" for Bush's foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> And Helle Dale notes that "foreign aid to Africa has grown in leaps and bounds under Mr. Bush, to the extent that it is in Africa he registers his most positive approval ratings".<sup>15</sup> The Bush Administration has, in fact, put significant resources into programmes intended to fight the spread of AIDS in Africa, an aspect of Bush foreign policies recognised and applauded by humanitarian aid activists in the United States and abroad. Fareed Zakaria points out that the Administration's approach can be criticised for being too focused on fighting terrorism and insufficiently effective in dealing with Africa's conflicts.<sup>16</sup> But, on balance, Administration policies provided important assistance to Africans and burnished the image of the United States there even as it was tarnished elsewhere.

*Africa is a  
"bright spot"  
for Bush's  
foreign policy*

### *Latin America*

David Frum argues that Bush Administration policies toward Latin America gave "[anti-American Venezuelan President] Hugo Chavez enough rope to hang himself...". President Bush also took an active interest in promoting good relations with neighbouring Mexico and a strong tie to the Colombian government, a key player in attempts to

fight drug trafficking. These pluses, however, are not the only grounds on which to judge Bush Administration policy toward Latin America. Unfortunately, Chavez's critiques of the United States appealed not only to many Venezuelans but to others across Latin America, where 'American imperialism' has remained the main bogeyman for the continent. And, the Administration missed an opportunity in relations with Cuba, where the passing of power from Fidel Castro to his brother created possible openings for re-connecting with the Cuban people. Instead, President Bush simply dismissed the modest liberalisation measures in Cuba as "empty gestures". Instead of following the example of Republican President Richard Nixon, who in the early 1970s produced the opening to China, the Bush Administration did very little to improve the future prospects for democratisation in Cuba or more favorable attitudes toward the United States elsewhere in Latin America.

### *Atlantic Alliance Relations*

From the outset, neither George Bush's persona nor his policies sat well with the European allies of the United States. For many Europeans, Bush fit the stereotype of the cowboy with the itchy trigger finger who shoots first and asks questions later. What's more, he seemed not to be interested in multilateral posesses where he might have to share decision-making responsibility. These images were confirmed for Europeans early in the President's first term, when the Administration unilaterally changed policies in directions opposed or feared by most Europeans. When 9/11 happened, Europeans, like most of the world, were ready to stand behind the United States in its hour of need, and even to provide military assistance as necessary.

Post-9/11 U.S. policies drove the U.S.-European relationship deep into crisis, with the United States making it clear it preferred to choose its own allies for each future conflict and affirming that it would go to war against Iraq come hell or high water. In the first term of this presidency, the Administration failed to maintain healthy relations with its allies. The image and support for the United States plummeted, in Europe and around the world.

To the credit of the second Bush Administration, the President and his National Security Adviser (Stephen Hadley), Secretaries of State (Condoleezza Rice) and Defense (Bob Gates) sought to repair the damage done to relations with U.S. allies, and particularly with NATO members. Frum argues that U.S. relations with its allies were troubled before Bush, and that the Administration never lost sight of the importance of allies, even if it sometimes was ham-handed in dealing with them.<sup>17</sup>

The bottom line, however, is that the first Bush Administration did serious damage to U.S. alliance relations, particularly in Europe. While efforts made during Bush's second term did contribute to helping get relationships back on more steady ground, most of the European allies began looking forward to new U.S. leadership with which to work more comfortably in the future.

## The Bottom Line

At the end of the day, even with some clear and some qualified successes, it is difficult to judge the overall foreign and security policy of the Bush Administration as successful in protecting and advancing U.S. interests. This should not take away from the fact that the Administration, with important help from its allies and international partners, did keep the homeland secure from attacks by foreign terrorists. This is an important accomplishment.

However, the costs of the war in Iraq, the failures in Afghanistan, the decline in respect and support for U.S. moral, political and strategic leadership, the divisions created in the transatlantic alliance, the stresses placed on the U.S. military establishment, the failed strategy toward Iran, and a fiscally irresponsible management of American resources, seriously weakening the United States financially, politically and strategically, arguably add up to a net loss for U.S. interests.

This does not mean that the Obama Administration should, or can, design its foreign and security policies with across-the-board rejection of Bush policies. It does mean that the new administration will have to start from its own assessment of American interests and threats to those interests, accepting continuity with Bush policies where it is warranted and striking out in new directions in the many areas where it will be necessary. The Obama team will have a brief honeymoon in relations with most of the world, and will have to make good use of the opportunities presented to re-establish respect for U.S. leadership and the foundation for the U.S. international role.

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React? Mail to [info@atlcom.nl](mailto:info@atlcom.nl).

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# • U.S. FOREIGN, SECURITY TEAM

*News Survey on Transatlantic Relations, European Security, and Dutch Foreign Policy*

## Period

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## Editor

David den Dunnen

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## Sources

The following sources have been used:

*NRC Handelsblad, de Volkskrant, International Herald Tribune, Financial Times, Jane's Defence Weekly, e-newsletters Eastweek, RFE/RL Balkan Report, ISN Security Watch and EIN News, and websites of CNN, BBC, Washington Post, Le Monde, NATO and the Pentagon (among others)*

## The United States after the Elections

### Obama's Foreign, Security Team Announced

On 20 January 2009 Barack Obama will be inaugurated the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. President-elect Obama presented his national security team on 1 December 2008.

- His former rival for the Democratic presidential nomination **Hillary Clinton** is set to exchange her seat in the U.S. Senate for the position of secretary of state, pending Senate confirmation. Criticism of Obama's pick concerns some of Clinton's statements on Israel and Iran during the campaign that could complicate her role in the Middle East.
- Obama's security team will be invigorated by **Robert Gates**, Secretary of Defense during the current Republican Administration. Gates was invited by the Democratic President-elect to continue in his post at the Pentagon. Obama's reasons for including Gates in his government are considered to include Gates's relatively independent position within the Bush Administration. More importantly, the Defense Secretary's policy priorities coincide with Obama's foreign policy stands. For instance, Gates advocates the transfer

of troops from Iraq to Afghanistan in the short term, cooperation with NATO Allies, and renewed emphasis on soft power and increasing State Department involvement in foreign security matters. Finally, Obama acknowledges the current Secretary of Defense's experience with the two major wars the United States is engaged in.

- For the position of national security adviser President-elect Obama recruited retired Marine Corps General **James Jones**. Capping a distinguished career in the military, General Jones served as Commander of U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) of NATO. During his tenure, Jones developed a professional relationship with Europe and has shown himself an advocate of transatlantic cooperation.

### *Change or Continuity?*

With these choices, Obama seems to have opted for continuity and expertise in his foreign policy and security team. Leading media have criticised the discrepancy between Obama's campaign slogan touting 'change' and his choice for continuity and expertise within his administration. However, Obama's pick of his confidante Susan Rice to take over the post of ambassador to the United Nations, that will hold cabinet rank, does

signal change in American foreign policy and a willingness for increased cooperation on the international level. As to doubts about whether a team of strong personalities with possibly diverging opinions could work together, Obama has made clear that he deliberately wishes to hear several points of view before taking a decision.

### Congress: 'Filibusters' Possible for Republicans

Apart from the presidential elections on 4 November, the Democratic Party also won the majority of seats in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. The Democrats now have 257 seats in the House, whereas the Republicans managed to win 178 seats, while by mid-December one seat remained undecided. The new partition of seats in the Senate is 56 for the Democrats and 41 for the Republicans. Two independent senators generally vote along with the Democrats. The decision about the remaining seat from the state of Minnesota awaits the results of a recount. Regardless of the outcome of that recount, the Democrats will fall short of the 60 seats needed to override Republican 'filibusters'. A filibuster is a delaying tactic by which a senator can indefinitely postpone the passing of a bill.



# • U.S. TROOP SURGE AFGHANISTAN



Hillary Clinton, the secretary of state nominee, talks with General Raymond Odierno, commander of Multinational Force Iraq

(Photo: U.S. Army/C. Cashour)

## Afghanistan – Pakistan

### Troop Surge

- Robert Gates, U.S. Secretary of Defense, indicated at the end of November 2008 that the U.S. plans to send some 25-30,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan. The Americans are now expected to take over the lead of the NATO-led mission in Southern Afghanistan. Gates has said that the U.S. will also adopt the less 'aggressive' approach that other ISAF partners have been using. In addition, the U.S. has reserved 2.5 billion U.S. dollars to step up efforts in training Afghan police and security forces. Gates stressed

that the American troops would come in addition to and should not be considered 'replacements' for the contributions of other NATO Allies, such as the Netherlands. The war in Afghanistan is a priority for U.S. President-elect Obama. He is expected to continue this policy.

### ISAF: Major Challenges, Security Problems

- An air raid by ISAF, 22 October, killed nine Afghan soldiers in the province of Khost. A U.S. military spokesman cited "misidentification" as the cause. A local general said that U.S. forces should have known about the presence of the Afghan soldiers, since they were

involved in the same mission. A joint investigation with the Afghan government into the exact causes of the incident has been started.

- German General Hans-Christoph Ammon, head of the army's elite commando unit, has called the efforts of his country in Afghanistan, particularly in training the Afghan police, "a miserable failure". Germany has invested a mere 12 million euro in the program, whereas the United States has already injected a billion dollars. The mission is highly unpopular in Germany.

### Attacks by Taliban

- A report by the U.S. military, released

# • U.S. TROOP SURGE AFGHANISTAN

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in early November, stated that local Afghan government officials aided Taliban insurgents in a deadly attack on a U.S. military outpost in July this year. According to the report, a district governor and a police chief were “complicit” in supporting the attack on 13 July. Nine American soldiers died in the attack, one of the highest reports of casualties in a single attack since the start of the war in 2001. The governor was not held responsible by the U.S. because he probably acted ‘under duress’. However, the police chief was “uncommunicative” at best, as he failed to inform the American troops about the security situation in the area.

- A Taliban suicide attacker managed to set off his bomb inside the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture on 31 October. According to the Kabul police at least five people were killed and 21 wounded. The attack came days after Afghan and Pakistani tribal leaders agreed to enter into talks with the Taliban. However, Taliban spokesman Qari Yousif said his group “rejected negotiations” with the government as long as foreign troops remain in the country.

## New Goal in Poppy Eradication

- From 26 to 29 November more than 1,000 representatives from the province of Uruzgan attended a ‘peace Jerga’ in Tarin Kowt. During the meeting it was agreed that the army and police should be strengthened by some 3,000 men from the region. The representatives also agreed that Uruzgan should be “free of the cultivation of poppy within two years time”.

## Mumbai Attacks: Pakistani Involvement?

- Tensions between Pakistan and India have flared up after the large-scale attacks by terrorists in Mumbai, India, from 26 to 29 November. The attacks left 188 people dead, including 31 foreigners. Ten gunmen, armed with AK-47 rifles and

grenades, attacked several hotels and cafés. Nine of the attackers were killed, one was arrested.

- Indian officials have claimed that the attacks were organised by the Pakistani illegal movement Lashkar-e-Taiba. The Pakistani government categorically denied any involvement. Many Indians rallied in Mumbai on 3 December to protest the attacks, shouting anti-Pakistani slogans. Pakistan’s president Zardari has vowed to take “strong action” against any “elements” in his country that might have been involved in the attacks.
- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited India on 3 December in an attempt to prevent an escalation of the conflict. Nuclear-armed neighbours Pakistan and India have fought several wars over the disputed province of Kashmir. Rice said that both countries should act “fully and transparently” in order to bring those responsible for the attacks to justice. According to analysts, the U.S. fears that tensions between Pakistan and India will distract Pakistan from its fight against militants on the Afghan border.

## Georgia – Russia

### Informal Talks Start

On 19 November 2008 Geneva hosted the first Georgian-Russian talks since the armed conflict between the two countries from 7 to 12 August this year. The unofficial meeting was co-chaired by the OSCE, the United Nations, and the European Union. The Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Heikki Talvitie, considered the talks “successful” and a first step toward more regular meetings.

On 15 October, a prior attempt to get Russia and Georgia around the table had failed due to Russia’s insistence on the presence of representatives from the Georgian breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia is one of the few countries to have recognised Abkha-

zia’s and South Ossetia’s self-proclaimed independence on 26 August. Georgia still regards these provinces as parts of its territory.

### Billions for Georgian Reconstruction

At a donor conference in Brussels on 22 October, the international community promised 3.5 billion euro for the reconstruction of Georgia after the five-day Georgian-Russian war. The aid, primarily provided by the European Union, is to help restore the infrastructure, help refugees return to their homes and to continue political reforms.

### Georgia: Changes of Officials

- The South Ossetian leadership appointed a new prime minister on 23 October: the former Russian tax officer Aslanbek Bulatsev. The nomination of a Russian national as head of the South Ossetian government increases the West’s suspicion of Russia’s having ‘annexed’ the region.
- On 28 October, Georgian President Michail Saakashvili named the 35-year-old ambassador to Turkey, Grigol Mgaloblishvili, as Prime Minister Gurgeneidze’s successor. Gurgeneidze’s departure was claimed to have been scheduled months before the Georgian-Russian war.

### Demonstrations by Opposition

In the meantime, the opposition coalition in Georgia, ‘United Opposition’, stepped up pressure on President Saakashvili to resign and hold new elections. On 7 November a demonstration was attended by approximately 10,000 people.

### Russia

#### Missile Threats

The Russian President, Dmitri Medvedev,

# • GEORGIAN – RUSSIAN TALKS • U.S. – IRAQI

# AGREEMENT • NATO, EU FIGHT PIRACY •

announced on 9 November that Russia will deploy short-range missiles to Kaliningrad, a Russian region between Poland and Lithuania, should the United States follow up on its intention to establish missile defence sites in Poland and the Czech Republic. The American President-elect Barack Obama has thus far refrained from taking a clear stand on the matter.

## *EU: Resumption of Negotiations*

On 14 November the European Union announced the resumption of the negotiations with Russia concerning a possible partnership. The talks, which originally had been scheduled for September, had been cancelled due to the Russian-Georgian war of August. Despite American reluctance, EU members agreed that Russia had fulfilled a large part of its obligations in the cease-fire deal brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy in his position as EU President. According to observers, the pressing global financial crisis motivated the EU's decision to resume the political talks with its no. 1 energy supplier.

## *Constitutional Change*

The Russian parliament's approval of an important constitutional change was passed on 14 November. Under the new construction, an elected president can stay in power for six years instead of the current four. Analysts claim that Medvedev's proposal is designed to increase the power of his mentor, Prime Minister and former president Vladimir Putin, in case of his return to the office of president. Without fully rejecting international suspicions, both Putin and Medvedev have downplayed the claims.

## Iraq

### **Status of Forces Agreement Reached**

- After several months of negotiations

the Iraqi cabinet voted in favour of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the United States on 16 November 2008. The Iraqi parliament voted in favour of the agreement on 27 November. The presidential council, the last hurdle for the agreement, ratified the SOFA on 4 December.

- The parliamentary vote for the agreement passed with 149 out of 198 votes, including Sunni members of parliament. The Iraqi parliament totals 275 MPs. Those politicians loyal to militia leader Muqtada al-Sadr voted against the agreement.
- With the new SOFA, a bilateral agreement between two sovereign nations will replace the UN mandate for the American-led operation in Iraq. The agreement indicates the legal position of U.S. troops on Iraqi soil and states that all U.S. forces are supposed to leave Iraqi cities by 2009 and the country by 2011.
- However, Iraqi parliamentarians have called for a referendum on the new agreement to be held next July. If the Iraqi people as a whole do not approve the deal, it may have to be renegotiated.
- General Ray Odierno, the coalition commander in Iraq, and President Bush both lauded the efforts of the Iraqi parliament. They said the agreement was a "clear sign" of the progress that has been made in Iraq as an 'emerging democracy'.

## Somalia

### **Piracy Threatens Western Interests**

- This year has seen more than 90 piracy attacks, mostly off the coast of Somalia. This is more than triple the number of 2007. This year around 150 million U.S. dollars has been paid in ransom to pirates. With increased audacity and sophisticated technology pirates have been able to seize ships further out to sea than before.
- In mid-November 2008 some 17 ships and around 250 sailors were being held

captive. Amongst these ships were the *Faina*, carrying tanks and other heavy weaponry to Kenya, and the *Sirius Star*, carrying a load of crude oil worth 100 million dollars. As a result of this piracy, many shipping companies are redirecting their transports via the Cape of Good Hope. The costs of the much longer shipping route could drive up consumer prices.

## *Countermeasures*

- The Indian navy reported on 19 November that it had sunk a pirate 'mother ship' after an exchange of fire. Currently at least 12 warships from different nations are patrolling the Gulf of Aden.
- By mid-December, the European Union takes over from NATO a maritime mission protecting vessels of the UN World Food Programme as well as deterring piracy. Over the course of 12 months some 20 ships from EU member states will take part in the mission code-named ATALANTA.
- The Netherlands has offered to lead the mission as of August 2009. It has offered to send the air defence and command frigate (LCF) *Hr. Ms. Evertsen* to the coast of the Horn of Africa.
- News sources reported that Russia will also send war vessels. According to Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, the EU and Russia would pool their efforts to fight piracy.
- In addition to traditional navies dozens of private security companies (PSCs) patrol the seas on behalf of African countries such as Somalia. The lack of strong national navies has proven to be problematic. As a result, some African nations have had to hire PSCs to guard private ships from pirates.

For more news please visit  
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# AGREEMENT • NATO, EU FIGHT PIRACY •

## 'The Road to NATO's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit'

On 19 November 2008 the Netherlands Atlantic Association organised a meeting with Dr Jamie Shea at Sociëteit De Witte, The Hague. Shea is Director of Policy Planning at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. During the meeting he addressed the many challenges that lie ahead for the Alliance. He also talked about the key issues on the agenda at the Strasbourg/Kehl anniversary summit meeting in April 2009.

Mr. Shea started with the remark that originally NATO was expected to last no more than 50 years. Now approaching 60, the Alliance has outlasted its original expected lifespan. The reason that the Alliance has survived is "because it has not failed", although it came close during the Bosnian war in 1994, according to Shea. Security threats today have "migrated" rather than disappeared, he said. During the Cold War the Soviet Union was the West's primary focus, but now global security threats have become more diffuse. The problems of today are more complex than during the Cold War. Then, NATO could deal with just one major issue at a time. Moreover, because there is no single clear threat, Alliance members lack a unified vision. Today, military operations last much longer and the use of force is not always as effective. In present-day missions the use of force needs to be complemented by non-military means.

Present-day security challenges create more demand for NATO. Its core business of deterrence still is relevant. NATO should prepare better for Article 5-type operations. According to Shea, NATO should also train more for "global Article 5 out-of-area operations". A second issue for NATO is protecting the life lines of its member states. Communication lines and trade routes need to be kept open. The resurgence of piracy is a major problem in this respect. Related to this issue is the need to change the politico-military infrastructure of the Alliance by re-establishing a maritime command. A last demand on NATO is that of being

*No-one benefits  
from deteriorating  
relations with  
the Russians*

a "good Samaritan", as Shea called it. Providing humanitarian assistance and the use of NATO's rapid response force (NRF) for that purpose create challenges of their own.

Shea addressed the changes that would be needed within NATO because of these increased demands. A new approach to the partnership arrangements is needed as the Alliance now has more partners than members. A more comprehensive approach is needed to share assets with other organisations, such as the UN and the EU. Since the EU too has expeditionary forces (Battle Groups) at its disposal, duplication should be avoided. Another key issue is the efficiency of the organisation. NATO's command structure might be too big, according to Shea. The role of the North Atlantic Council needs to be more managerial.

One of the concerns about the Alliance Shea expressed was that some members consider it as a means of serving their own national agenda and are not con-

cerned with the broader picture. Member states should display more solidarity toward their fellow Alliance members. This will lead to a stronger consensus among them and provide a clearer vision as to where NATO wants to go. Right now member states have too many possibilities to opt out. As a consequence, decisions are not always implemented by all members.

Shea also stated that NATO should have a bigger say on political issues. In the case of policy areas where NATO is involved it should have a seat at the negotiating table. Shea elaborated by saying that it took a very long time for NATO to take part in the negotiations on Bosnia, even though the Alliance led large troop contingents in this country for years. Finally, NATO needs to broaden its horizon and anticipate events. To do this there needs to be more discussion among the members on issues such as missile defence. These internal discussions will help develop NATO's political sphere of influence.

Shea outlined some considerations regarding issues likely to dominate the agenda at the anniversary summit meeting in 2009. On the issue of Afghanistan he believed that more can be done. With more troops and resources NATO could expand its influence. What is more, operational restrictions need to be removed in order to operate more effectively. Local governments need to be improved and more Afghan troops need to be trained. Contributing nations need to be able to decide on their own goals, increasing the





In a closing statement Shea said that NATO has done a "relatively decent job" over the past 60 years. However, there exists a discrepancy between its ambitions and resources. Equipment needs to be upgraded to be able to carry out 21<sup>st</sup>-century operations. The Alliance needs to develop a new strategic concept and a mission statement in order to make it easier to explain what NATO stands for.

In response to a question from the audience Shea said that he hoped and expected that many pressing issues concerning the Afghanistan mission would reach a breakthrough at the summit in Strasbourg/Kehl. U.S. President-elect Obama has indicated that Afghanistan will be of major interest to his administration. As of yet it is unclear what his specific policies will be, but it is clear that Afghanistan will serve as a test case for the Obama Administration. Regarding a question on how to increase European involvement in Afghanistan, Shea responded that each country should be allowed to formulate its own specific goals within a comprehensive framework. This could help the parliamentary debate in each country.

Jan-Jouke Mulder

Shea: "There exists a discrepancy between NATO's ambitions and resources" (Photo: NATO)

willingness to contribute to ISAF. Shea also believed that NATO should continue talking to the Russians. Member states

need to express their interest in Russia, since no-one benefits from deteriorating relations with the Russian government.

## The Road toward a Post-American World

A Review of

*The Post-American World* by Fareed Zakaria

Norton, New York/London, 2008

Hardcover, 288 pages, € 20.00

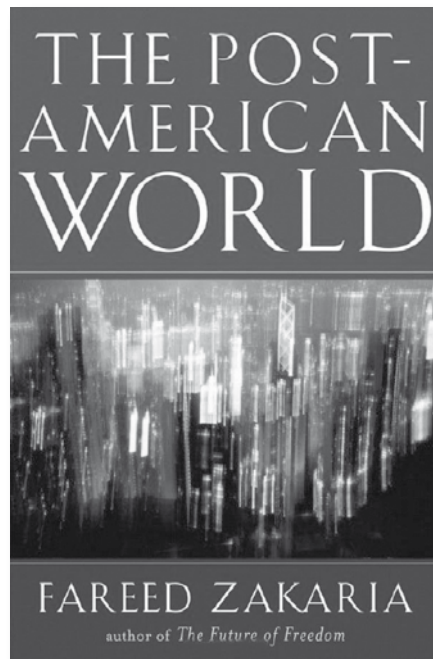
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### What Era Do We Live in?

Since 1989 a common characterisation of the era we live in, from the perspective of international relations, has been the 'post-Cold War world'. As this definition does no more than contrast the current era with the previous one of the Cold War, I have always taken this as a lack of a proper characterisation of the times after 1989/1991. With the title of his book *The Post-American World*, Zakaria gives an apt description of the first two decades following the Cold War: the American World. And indeed, as he writes, 2002 was, in his view, the high point of unipolarity, that is, the era of the sole superpower, the United States. The subject of his book is, however, the period following this era: the post-American world.

### Zakaria's Central Thesis

The central thesis of the book is 'the rise of the rest', that is, the rise of countries such as China, India, Brazil and others, countries that, because of their growing influence, will make their mark on the system of international relations. Zakaria argues that this is not so much a matter of decline of the U.S. – as this country will continue to grow and prosper economically and be the prime mover in world politics for years to come – but the rise of the others. Zakaria argues that we are now in the midst of the third 'tectonic' power shift of the last 500 years: the first saw the rise of the West and modernity, which produced modern science and technology, commerce and capitalism, and the agricultural and industrial revolutions; the second saw the rise of the U.S.



during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the third – the one we find ourselves in now – sees China, India, Brazil and others becoming bigger players in the world, Russia becoming more assertive, and Europe acting with growing confidence, in particular in matters of trade and economics. "For the first time ever, we are witnessing genuinely global growth. This is creating an international system in which countries in all parts of the world are no longer objects or observers but players in their own right," Zakaria writes (p. 3). "In the long run [...] the rise of the rest will gather strength, whatever the temporary ups and downs." (p. 219) One is inclined to think that the current financial crisis is one of the 'downs'.

According to Zakaria's central thesis, the rising 'rest' also includes non-state actors: international organisations – he

mentions the World Trade Organisation and the European Union – non-governmental groups of all kinds, individuals, corporations and companies, but also terrorist groups, drug cartels, insurgents and others. "Power is shifting away from nation states, up, down and sideways." (p. 4) A consequence of this transformation of power from the nation state to other actors, in my view, is that the application of power and influence by the state is becoming less effective. This may have a bearing on the system of international relations as important as the rising influence of countries other than the U.S. Strangely enough, Zakaria merely mentions the point in his book, but does not elaborate on it. Even though his central thesis has two legs, Zakaria addresses only one of them in developing his line of reasoning. That is a missed opportunity, if only for the reason that the two developments – the rise of states other than the U.S. and the shifting of power away from the nation state to other actors – may influence, perhaps even contradict each other.

### Reshaping the System of International Relations

According to Zakaria, we no longer live in a world in which the 'rest' must choose between the options of either integrating into the Western order or rejecting it and facing the penalties. "Rising powers appear to be following a third way: entering the Western order but doing so on their own terms – thus reshaping the system." (p. 36) "In a post-American world there



Zakaria's book is not about the decline of America but rather about the 'rise of the rest', e.g. China (Photo: UN Photo/S. Price)

may be no centre to integrate into," he argues (p. 36). Zakaria uses the metaphor of a free market to illustrate the way the system of international relations will be reshaped by the rise of the rest. Just as in a free market the economic result cannot always be predicted from the decisions of individuals, in international politics the intentions of countries do not always accurately point to a certain outcome.

The obvious example is China, a country whose continuing rise can hardly go unnoticed because of its sheer size. "China views itself as a nation intent on rising peacefully, its behaviour marked by humility, non-interference, and friendly relations with all." (p. 114) "Just how peacefully China can rise will be determined by a combination of Chinese actions, other countries' reactions and the systemic effects this interaction produces." (p. 115) China is too big to hide. "China operates on so large a scale that it can't help

changing the nature of the game." (p. 115)

As to how the system of international relations will change, Zakaria is somewhat vague and ambiguous. As long as the 'rest' feel that they can be accommodated, the countries concerned *may* develop into responsible stakeholders. What is needed is "consultation, co-operation and even compromise" (p. 233). Isn't that the every-day work of diplomats today rather than a sketch of the future? Under the new circumstances, America will play a vital, though different role, namely that of honest broker: "The chair of the board who can gently guide a group of independent directors is still a very powerful person." (p. 233) Whom is Zakaria trying to convince of his views here? Again, isn't this more of an (adequate) description of today's international relations rather than a glance at the future of these relations?

## Two Misunderstandings

For some reason or other Zakaria's book has given rise to two misunderstandings as to what he wants to say. The first is that America's power and influence is declining, that we are witnessing a phenomenon that might be characterised as 'the fall of the U.S.' The second is that we are already living in the post-American world.

The first misunderstanding is easy to refute. Time and again, Zakaria argues that the U.S. will continue to be the most powerful nation in the world for years to come. The first sentence of Zakaria's book says: "This is a book not about the decline of America but rather about the rise of everyone else." (p. 1) That the process of the rise of the rest will lead to a *relative* decline of U.S. power and influence is a logical consequence of his line of reasoning. What Zakaria does

write, however, is that the rise of the rest will probably take place at the expense of Japan and Europe. "In the next few decades, the rise of emerging powers is *likely* [emphasis added, FvB] to come mostly at the expense of Western Europe and Japan, which are locked in a slow, demographically determined decline." (p. 41) This does not hold true for the U.S. as this country is demographically vibrant because of the continuing influx of immigrants.

The second misunderstanding is harder to refute. This may be because of the very title of the book: 'The Post-American World', which may give readers the impression that we are already there. In some parts of the book Zakaria seems to say that we are; in others that we are not. "We are moving into a post-America world, one defined and directed from many places and by many people." (p. 5) "While unipolarity continues to be a defining reality of the international system for now, every year it becomes weaker and other nations [than the U.S., FvB] and other actors [than nation states] grow in strength." (p. 219) The message I take from Zakaria is that we are currently in the process of transformation from the American to the post-American world. That is why I entitled this review 'The Road toward a Post-American World'. We are not there yet, but following Zakaria's line of thinking, we are on our way.

### Two Issues to Reflect on

Although Zakaria's writing may cause misunderstanding, I find reactions such as the one by Karl-Heinz Kamp (NATO Defense College, Rome) hard to place ('It's Not the Demise of the West but its Rise', *Europe's World*, Autumn 2008, pp. 24-29). Although Kamp seems to exempt Zakaria's book from the 'decline thesis', his line of reasoning is beside the point from the perspective of *The Post-American World*. He repeats that: no, U.S. military dominance is not going to wane

in the coming decades; yes, the U.S. economy still ranks as the world's most competitive; and yes, soft power continues to be a major asset. Still, as Zakaria argues, countries like China, India, Brazil and others will develop into world players thanks to their vibrant potential, which will have consequences for the relations between these countries and the present system of international relations. Kamp, however, does not address this 'rise of the rest'.

*Rising powers  
enter the Western  
order on their  
own terms*

A more relevant question would be, in my view, in what way consensus could be achieved in a world where so many wish to have their say. Can we be sure none of the players will be tempted to use violence in certain instances? (No, we cannot.) I deem this question all the more important against the background of the concept of international legitimacy. Zakaria writes: "As power becomes diversified and diffuse, legitimacy becomes even more important – because it is the only way to appeal to all disparate actors on the world stage." (p. 39) His observation that the institutions we have – the UN, the G8 – are 'outdated' is valid, yet not new. An issue to think about would be how to forge consensus in a world where disparate actors, partly autocratic, do not share each others' perspectives on international relations and probably will not agree on the rules as to how the game of international politics should be played, while the *status quo* of the system

is changing. To use Zakaria's metaphor of a board of directors: there is a fair chance that its composition will be disputed – every director wants his own friends round the table and threatens to walk out if he does not get his way – so that the agenda cannot be agreed upon and that the rules of the way deliberations will be conducted will be disputed too. Imagine the situation in which there is no agreement on who will chair the board while urgent matters need to be taken care of. In that case, Zakaria's description of 'the chair of the board who can gently guide a group of independent directors' is a pretty rosy picture of a reshaped system of international relations. The actual outcome may be more disturbing.

### In Conclusion

Zakaria has written a thoughtful, sometimes provocative book that deserves to be read, not only by scholars and academics, but also by practitioners of international politics such as policy makers, military officers, and diplomats. His observations are original, his perspective is creative and his line of reasoning is sound. Thanks to a reporters' style of writing the book is a good read and easily accessible. I have argued that Zakaria leaves a few loose ends and could perhaps have elaborated on a few points that he now merely touches upon. One might ask who wouldn't, given such a wide-ranging subject as the 'post-American world'. More important, in my view, is that Zakaria directs us to a few issues we need to work on since the rise of the rest will reshape the present system of international relations. There is work to do.

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## Response

to the review published in *Atlantisch Perspectief* no. 7  
of

*Financing of Peacekeeping Operations*  
*A Benchmark Study*

Marcel de Haas and Martijn Beerthuizen

*CSCP Occasional Paper*, June 2008

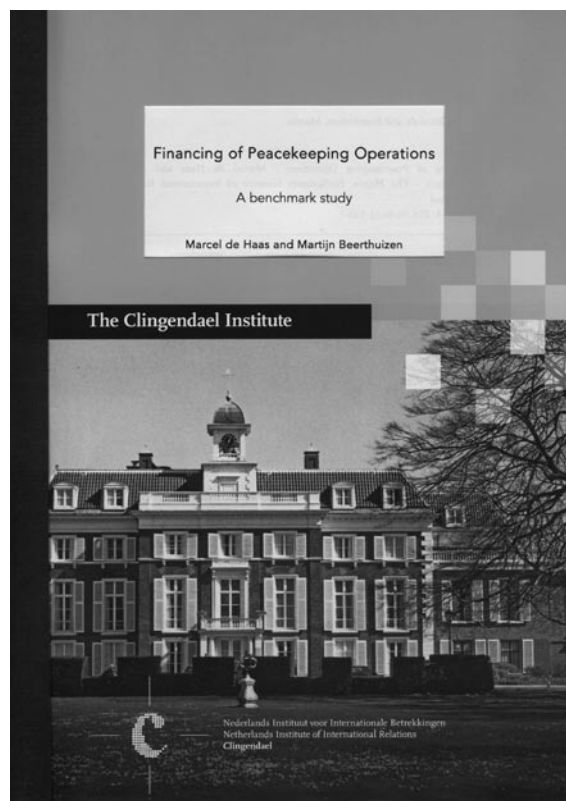
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In the previous edition of *Atlantisch Perspectief*, Mr. Auke Venema presents a very interesting review of our research paper *Financing of Peacekeeping Operations*. Until recently he was posted at the Dutch Ministry of Defence (MoD) directorate that is directly involved in the defence budget. Even though the review was informative on this budget, it deserves a critical response. We respond because Mr. Venema reviewed only part of our paper, not the core of the work. The paper does not examine the Dutch defence budget itself, but is a benchmark study of the financing of peacekeeping operations in which the Dutch arrangements are compared to those of Canada, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK). Venema's reiterated plea for an increase in the Dutch defence budget and his appraisal of the current financial structure gives proof of a personal agenda, which would be appropriate as an opinion article but not as a review. The MoD, however, did not give this assignment to the Clingendael Institute because it wanted them to conclude beforehand that the current Dutch defence budget arrangement is perfect, but because it wanted the Institute to make an unbiased analysis. This is what should be expected from an independent academic institution.

Venema mentions the rather limited



research principles of comparing budgetary constructions of the five countries involved. This statement is remarkable, since Venema was functionally involved at the start of this research project, but refrained from criticising these principles at the time. All four benchmark countries have incorporated operations financing within their defence budgets, which differs from the practice of the Netherlands, where operations financing is a part of the interdepartmental budget for international cooperation or

HGIS. Venema considers this fact of no significant importance and "not convincing". Either the Dutch system must be brilliant or we could possibly learn something from constructions within the defence budget, as the four benchmark (and other) countries do. Venema states that in recent years HGIS was repeatedly enlarged and that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance have, incidentally, supplied additional financial means to the MoD. That in itself proves not only that the defence budget has not been sufficient – with which we agree – but also demonstrates that the HGIS arrangement does not provide adequate buffers against sudden problems, such as replacement of worn-out or destroyed equipment. These are neither accounted for in HGIS nor provided for in the MoD budget.

Venema sees "disturbing discrepancies" since we would suggest that NATO and the EU, unlike the UN, do not practice collective financing of peacekeeping operations. Here, we note the following. The UN reimburses part of the costs of a peacekeeping operation, whereas NATO and the EU act mostly on a 'costs lie where they fall' basis, as mentioned in a study of Venema's former directorate. Consequently, the Netherlands has to finance most of its own costs for NATO or EU operations. Therefore we do not disregard this fact. Rather, it is a differ-

ent concept of reimbursement. A serious mistake is that Venema blames us for not mentioning interdepartmental financing of military support to national civilian authorities. However, this is a different task of defence and bears no relation to international peacekeeping operations, the topic of our research.

*All 4 benchmark countries have incorporated operations financing in their defence budgets...*

Venema did not go into detail on the subject matter: benchmarking the financing of peacekeeping operations of the Netherlands and four allies. We recommended re-evaluating the overall division of the Dutch defence budget and looking into the possibility of adding a specific budget line for peacekeeping operations, which would imply transferring the HGIS peacekeeping operations provision to the defence budget. This could increase cost transparency by erasing the artificial division between 'normal' and 'additional' costs (provided for by HGIS) and increase efficiency by centralising all peacekeeping operations expenditures. Budgetary structures are not static but designed to be purposeful. The Dutch MoD has assessed the results of our research project positively. Subsequently, the MoD has asked the Clingendael Institute to include this report in a larger benchmark study on the countries mentioned plus Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, and Poland. This study will be part of an extensive future policy survey ('Verkenningen') of the MoD together with other departments,

which will provide a foundation for the Netherlands armed forces of 2020. The MoD expects to publish this report at the end of 2009.

Marcel de Haas and  
Martijn Beerthuisen

## Rejoinder

Perhaps I should have refrained from reviewing this report as my disappointment was personal indeed. It is up to the readers to decide whether I made the wrong decision to review the report.

In my previous position at the Ministry of Defence, which I held until November 2007, I welcomed the research principles of the Clingendael study. A benchmark study comparing Dutch financing arrangements with other countries looked very promising indeed. How do other MoDs cope with ever-rising costs; do they have solutions worth taking into consideration? However, confronted with the resulting report ten months later I was disappointed (I promise this is the last time I will use the word...). The report merely describes the various arrangements and systems in place, but does not give the reader any clue as to whether the MoDs concerned actually are better off or not. It remains unclear, for instance, whether the benchmark countries have provisions for worn-out or destroyed equipment. The report does not give an answer either to the question of how suc-

cessful the benchmark MoDs have been in acquiring additional funds (compared to the Dutch MoD). Evidence is lacking on why we should favour constructions within the defence budget. My criticism therefore concerns the core of the report. HGIS is neither brilliant nor perfect, but until proven wrong it is the best way to secure additional funding.

My remarks concerning the limitations of the research principles pointed to the fact that the authors do not discuss the political stalemate concerning the use of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) money to cover the additional costs of crisis management operations in failed states such as Afghanistan. I included the word "understandably", if I remember correctly. Furthermore, I do not consider my criticism that the authors did not mention interdepartmental financing of defence support to civil authorities a "serious mistake" on my side. The report wrongly includes defence support to civil authorities in the grey area where (re)funding of defence activities is unclear. The same applies to the explanation of the authors regarding the EU and NATO. The report should have quoted the MoD report correctly in the first place. Enough said. I wish the authors all the best in writing the expanded benchmark study that includes other countries as well.

Auke Venema

*... but are the MoDs concerned actually better off or not?*

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