

Chapter Eleven

The Obama Presidency

A Foreign Policy of Change?

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Barack Obama ran for the presidency on a policy of change—change in domestic policy and change in foreign policy. During both the nomination and election campaigns, this focus on change was the overarching theme that he struck at virtually every stop on the campaign trail. In foreign policy, Candidate Obama's emphasis on change focused on an array of issues—ending the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and bringing American troops home; “resetting” and “restarting” American relations with allies and other major powers throughout the world; engaging with adversaries to address a number of outstanding issues; and dealing with global economic and military issues, most notably nuclear proliferation. The larger aim of this “change” emphasis was to enable the United States to reengage with the world and to move away from the isolated position that America found itself after the seeming unilateralist policies of the Bush administration. In this chapter, we examine the foreign policy approach and policies of the Obama administration and assess how well it has achieved this change.

VALUES AND BELIEFS OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

The foreign policy approach that emerged during Obama's presidency was one that appeared to align closely with the liberal internationalist approach to foreign policy (albeit with some realist exceptions). This approach has a substantial heritage in American foreign policy, dating back at least to Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but it has also found more recent expression in foreign policy elements of the Carter and Clinton administrations.

A LIBERAL INTERNATIONALIST APPROACH

A liberal internationalist approach is one that is grounded in a number of core values and beliefs about the motivations and aims of foreign policy behavior for individual states and for the United States in particular. First of all, key domestic values, such as the promotion of democracies and individual freedoms, are viewed as important ways to create a stable and peaceful international order. In this context, the Obama approach would find appeal among those who see the “democratic peace” theory as the way to global order. Following this tradition, too, the basis of US foreign policy would flow directly from its domestic values as a nation, even as the United States works to promote such values internationally. Second, liberal internationalism calls for promoting international cooperation and interdependence in a variety of ways as a means to knit states and peoples today in a web of interdependence to address common problems and reduce the risk of conflict. In this sense, the United States would promote free trade among nations, but it also would promote cooperative actions across borders by different levels of government and among numerous civil society groups. Third, international law and international institutions are assumed to “have a modernizing and civilizing effect on states” and also fit within this liberal internationalist tradition for enhancing global cooperation and interdependence (on Wilsonianism and this quote, see Ikenberry 2008). In this way, American foreign policy would utilize regional and global organizations, since they, too, are essential in tying states and the international community together. Fourth, and particularly important from this perspective and its Wilsonian roots, the United States would not only stay involved in global affairs, but it would assist in bringing about a stable, liberal order through its cooperative and constructive leadership efforts. Moreover, these actions would not be done in any top-down or directive way; instead, they would be evoked through cooperative actions with states and actors.

In several respects, liberal internationalism stands in considerable contrast to the foreign policy approach of the George W. Bush administration, an approach variously described as a combination of “defensive realism” and “idealism,” “revival Wilsonianism,” or neoconservatism (McCormick 2010, 212–13). A liberal internationalist approach begins from a more cooperative assumption about foreign policy and global politics than the Bush administration adopted, especially after the events of September 11, when President Bush announced that “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (quoted in McCormick 2010, 214). This approach also emphasizes the utility of multilateral means to address foreign policy, an approach that the Bush administration generally viewed skeptically from the outset of its tenure. In this sense, the Obama approach places greater reliance on diplomacy and

"soft power" instruments for achieving foreign policy change and thus stands in marked distinction from the Bush administration's seeming reliance on coercive diplomacy and "hard power" instruments.

At least two important similarities in goals, however, exist between Obama's liberal internationalist and Bush's neoconservative approaches. Both approaches favor the fostering of democracies, and both call for American leadership. Yet, they differ substantially on how best to achieve these goals. The Obama approach focuses on building democracy from the bottom up, while the Bush approach sought, at least in practice, to impose it from the top down. Both approaches also favor American leadership, but again, they differ on how to pursue that goal. The Obama approach calls for more cooperative leadership ("partnerships" as the Obama administration continuously describes it), while the Bush administration favored a more assertive American leadership to encourage followership.

THE GLOBAL VISION: A MULTI-PARTNER WORLD

A more precise foreign policy framework for the Obama administration, closely aligned to the campaign themes, emerged during the first year of the administration and took even fuller shape by the middle of the second year in office. In his 2009 inaugural address, for example, President Obama once again alluded to this change in foreign policy from the Bush years with an explicit promotion of American values as the basis of policy and with an appeal for diplomacy toward adversaries: "We reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. . . . Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake," and, "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." Yet, he also signaled a continuation of past foreign policy in this way: "We will not apologize for our way of life nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that, 'Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.'" As Stanley Renshon (2010, 7–8) correctly pointed out for us (and from which we draw), the former set of statements would appeal to liberals (and liberal internationalists in our parlance), while the latter set of statements would appeal to conservatives and political realists. In all, although change was in the air, the degree of change was again mixed with a commitment to continuity in policy.

During the first several months of the administration, President Obama's foreign policy team conducted a policy review. The results of that review were

announced through a series of presidential speeches that President Obama gave from April to July 2009 in several world capitals in differing parts of the world (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa). In April 2009 in Prague, the Czech Republic, he extolled the virtues of the changes that have occurred in that country in a few short years and called for cooperation and policy coordination among nations "to renew our prosperity" and "to provide for our common security." He also set out his goal of "a world without nuclear weapons" and outlined a series of steps to move in that direction by completing a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and initiating "a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years." In June 2009 in Cairo, Egypt, President Obama called for "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims; one based on mutual interest and mutual respect" and sought to show the substantial ties between the Muslim world and the United States over the decades and centuries. Importantly, he called for "a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground," and he went on to state that "our problems must be dealt with through partnership; [and] our progress must be shared."

In July 2009, President Obama gave foreign policy speeches in two other capitals—one in Moscow, Russia, the other in Accra, Ghana. In both speeches, he sought to reach out to these differing audiences and to highlight the change in American policy that he wanted to initiate. In Moscow, President Obama called for a "reset" in relations between the United States and Russia." The aim, he said, would be "a sustained effort among the American and Russian people to identify mutual interests, and expand dialogue and cooperation that can pave the way to progress." Finally, in Accra, President Obama once again struck this theme of international cooperation and partnership: "I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world—as partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all of our children." In that speech, he particularly focused on issues relating to the needs of Africa and the developing world: the need for democratic governments, development that provides opportunity, governance that strengthens public health, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In all these areas, the United States would stand as "partners" with Africa.

At roughly the same time, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered an important foreign policy address at home. In that address, she committed the United States to a leadership position, albeit a particular kind, identified the basic values to inform the Obama administration's foreign policy priorities, outlined how the administration would conduct its foreign policy, and crystallized the view of the kind of international system that the administration wished to create. In particular, she stated that the United States would continue

to lead in global affairs, but the nation “need[s] a new mindset about how America will use its power to safeguard our nation, expand shared prosperity, and help more people in more places live up to their God-given potential” (Clinton 2009b).

In particular, she rejected the approaches of the past and committed the administration to working toward “a different global architecture” to address the common challenges and threats in the world today. Importantly, Secretary Clinton said that Americans will

use our power to convene, our ability to connect countries around the world, and sound foreign policy strategies to create partnerships aimed at solving problems. We’ll go beyond states to create opportunities for non-state actors and individuals to contribute to solutions. . . . In short, we will lead by inducing greater cooperation among a greater number of actors and reducing competition, *tilting the balance away from a multi-polar world and toward a multi-partner world.* (Clinton 2009b, emphasis added)

Secretary Clinton also incorporated an important realist exception to her “focus on diplomacy and development” as a basic approach. When the United States is threatened, she said, “We will not hesitate to defend our friends, our interests, and above all, our people vigorously and when necessary with the world’s strongest military.” In other words, the unilateral option of self-reliance is still very much available.

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: “A STRATEGY OF ENGAGEMENT”

The national security strategy statement of May 2010 (White House 2010), from which the following discussion is drawn, summarized the foreign policy approach of the Obama administration. Its “strategic approach,” the administration declared, was grounded in three fundamental ideas: (1) the need to rebuild the American economy as the basis for strong global leadership, (2) a commitment to living American values at home in order to credibly promote them abroad, and (3) a commitment to reshaping the international system in a way that it will enable the global community to address the challenges of the twenty-first century. To actualize these ideas, the overarching strategy by the United States would be a “strategy of engagement.”

Such widespread engagement would be utilized to address four principal goals in order to “achieve the world we seek”: (1) achieve and maintain security for the United States, allies, and partners; (2) rebuild and strengthen the American economy through an open international system “that promotes

opportunity and prosperity;" (3) promote universal values abroad; and (4) work toward an international order "that can foster collective action to confront common challenges." Each of these four areas requires the United States to address specific issues to realize these principal goals and the national security strategy discussed each in turn.

Security

The first major goal for the United States is to address multiple security threats of the current era. These new threats range from "a loose network of violent extremists," the dangers posed by failing states, and the spread of nuclear weapons. In addition, though, these threats include "asymmetric" ones in which adversaries target outer space and cyberspace as ways to harm and undermine American (and, indeed, global) society.

For each of these threats, the Obama administration outlined its proposed course of actions. For terrorism, the administration called for developing a greater domestic capacity to address emergencies at home, and it remained committed "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates" abroad in partnership with others. For the threat of nuclear and biological weapons, the administration called for strengthening the NPT, creating a nuclear-free Korean peninsula through the denuclearization of North Korea, and compelling Iran to move away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the administration would also seek to secure all "vulnerable nuclear weapons and materials" and counter the potential of biological weapons. For the threat from failing states and unresolved conflicts, the administration called for a "responsible transition" as the United States ended the war in Iraq, endorsed a two-state solution for the Arab-Israel conflict, remained open to offering Iran "a pathway to a better future, provided Iran's leaders are prepared to take it," and offered to aid states transitioning from recent conflicts. Finally, on the threat to cyberspace, the administration vowed to work with the private sector and with other governments "to investigate cyber intrusion and to ensure an organized and unified response to future cyber incidents."

Importantly, the administration was careful to specify its position on the use of force in addressing the terrorist threats. Although the national strategy statement indicates that the use of force "may be necessary to defend our country and allies and to preserve broader peace and security," the administration is careful to specify that it "will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against costs and risks of inaction." The strategy of the Obama administration is more circumspect in the use of force than the strategy outlined by the Bush administration in its 2002 national security strategy.

Prosperity

The second major goal of the national security strategy is to rebuild and strengthen the American economy as the basis for a continuing leadership role in the world. The statement outlines actions, both domestically and internationally, that must be done to accomplish this goal. Domestically, the administration calls for improvement in the quality of American education from the elementary through the university level. The statement also commits the administration to "support programs that cultivate interest and scholarship in foreign languages and intercultural affairs," and to comprehensive immigration reform as a way to improve America's human capital. Finally, the United States must reduce the nation's deficit, reform the contracting process within the government to reduce waste and inefficiency, and increase the level of transparency, so that the public can more fully follow how the taxpayers' dollars are being spent.

Internationally, the United States must expand the growth of the "integrated, global economy," even as it addresses the "economic imbalances and financial excesses." The national security strategy statement calls on Americans to spend less and save more, double American exports by 2014, and take more actions to open up markets for American products. The Obama administration will also support the G-20 nations' "emergence as the premier forum for international economic cooperation" in the global community, and will provide leadership to that organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank in making necessary global financial reforms. Finally, the administration called for economic changes in developing economies, although those changes should be done within the context of "long-term development" and "sustainable development."

Values

The third major goal of the national security strategy is the promotion of key fundamental values. These values are the basic fundamental individual freedoms contained in the US constitution that the Obama administration believes are universal and important to promote globally. In order to make the promotion of these values legitimate around the world, they need to be respected at home. In this sense, the United States must prohibit the use of torture against individuals and must adhere to the rule of law in its actions, including in dealing with terrorism. Abroad, the United States will promote democracy and human rights "because governments that respect these values are more just, peaceful, and legitimate." Yet, the United States "will not impose any system of government on another country." Instead, it will support

and build the capacity of those states pursuing democratic development. Such assistance will be undertaken both through working directly with other governments and also working through civil society groups to create and expand key democratic institutions. Finally, the Obama administration indicated that its emphasis on global freedom also meant “freedom from want,” and that it would promote a new global health initiative, promote greater food security, and continue to respond to global humanitarian crises.

International Order

The final goal outlined in the national security statement is the establishment of “a just and sustainable international order that can foster collective action to confront common challenges.” The Obama administration views this component of the national security strategy as crucial to the advancement of the earlier three goals.

To bring about this new order, the national security strategy statement calls on a long litany of American actions and priorities. The United States will sustain its security relations with America’s traditional allies in Europe, Asia, and North America; build cooperative relations with those that are the “21st Century Centers of Influence” (e.g., China, India, and Russia); and expand its ties with the G-20 nations (e.g., Indonesia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, South Africa, and South Korea). In addition, the United States will work to strengthen the United Nations, devolve some responsibility for collective action to a variety of international institutions, and invest in strengthening the capacity of regional organizations across the globe as a way to enhance worldwide security.

The ultimate test of this new international order, the national security strategy points out, is the ability to obtain global cooperation to address the current system challenges. Such challenges range from climate change, ethnic and genocidal conflict to global pandemics, transnational criminal syndicates, and issues of the “global commons”—shared seas, air, and space among nations. No one state could adequately address these issues; hence, the administration would work to achieve collective action within the international community.

THE OBAMA WORLDVIEW IN OPERATION

The foreign policy approach of the Obama administration is broad, comprehensive, and ambitious in conception—and considerably at variance with the Bush administration approach. In this sense, the Obama approach represents a dramatic change in foreign policy orientation. The important question, how-

ever, is whether this approach has had any impact in the first two years. How much of this approach has been implemented? Has the approach changed the substance of American foreign policy? Has this approach yielded greater foreign policy success than its predecessor in addressing key issues?

IMPROVING AMERICA'S GLOBAL IMAGE

In terms of reengaging the United States with the international community, the Obama approach has surely changed from the Bush administration. President Obama made important foreign policy speeches in key capitals across different continents and regions—Europe, Africa, and the Middle East—in an effort to reach out to the world and improve America's image. He has also engaged key world leaders in bilateral diplomatic summits (e.g., with Russian president Medvedev) and in a variety of multilateral forums (e.g., the G-8, the G-20, APEC). Furthermore, his administration has appointed a large number of special envoys to address a broad range of global issues, whether over Darfur, Afghanistan, North Korea, the Middle East, or elsewhere. Finally, and importantly, the United States has increased its use of regional and international organizations in pursuit of its foreign policy goals. In all, the efforts at global engagement have been substantial and pervasive during the early years of the Obama administration.

Indeed, this engagement, and the president's personal popularity worldwide, has had an effect on America's image abroad. In Pew Research Center polls in 2009 and 2010 across twenty-five and twenty-two countries, respectively, the "US favorability rating" improved considerably in most countries surveyed (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2009, 2010). The greatest improvement occurred in Western European countries (Britain, France, Germany, and Spain), but the view of America was also more positive, particularly in Latin American, African, and Asian nations. On another question in the 2009 survey, which asks whether Obama "will do the right thing in world affairs," large majorities across the respondents in the surveyed countries were now more confident that President Obama would do so as compared to the results for a similar question for President Bush in 2008. The absolute levels for this "do the right thing" question in the 2010 survey continued to show considerable confidence in President Obama for most of the countries surveyed, although the percentages across all the countries were systematically lower than in 2009. In this sense, some confidence in President Obama's actions had begun to erode.

Yet, the global attitudinal change witnessed in numerous countries has not occurred in most Muslim countries. Generally the Muslim countries included

in these surveys continued to hold negative views when measured on the US favorability scale or on the "do the right thing" question. In Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and the Palestinian territories in the 2009 Pew survey, for example, an overwhelming number of respondents continued to have a negative view of the United States, and they expressed low levels of confidence in President Obama "doing the right thing." Such patterns continued for the 2010 survey results and actually eroded for that year.

Keeping these exceptions about Muslim countries in mind and some erosion of confidence in other countries, as well, these results still suggest that President Obama improved the perception of the United States in the global arena. In this sense, this aspect of the global "soft power" quotient of the United States has improved under the Obama administration. But has this improvement in America's soft-power quotient been translated into agreement or accommodation with American foreign policy, either among the global publics or policymakers?

The evidence appears mixed. The 2010 Pew survey results indicate that majorities in about half of the twenty-two countries now support the anti-terrorism policies of Obama, but majorities in many of these same countries continue to oppose the war in Afghanistan. On Obama's policy toward Iran, majorities or pluralities in about half of the surveyed countries oppose it, and on Obama's handling of the Middle East conflict, most of the countries opposed his policy. Yet, on some important global commons issues (e.g., climate change, the world economic crisis, and Obama's overall international performance), the majority or plurality of respondents in fourteen or more of the twenty-two countries voiced their approval (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2010, 4-5). Still, the overall conclusion is that President Obama's popularity among the global publics has not fostered uniform support for his policies.

The same conclusion applies when considering the reaction of policymakers around the globe to his policy efforts. Whether seeking NATO nations to maintain or increase their troops in Afghanistan, urging the European Union nations to stimulate their economies, or seeking to prod greater support from China over North Korean or Iranian nuclear ambitions, Obama's global popularity has not automatically produced policy support from these leaders during the first two years of his administration. Instead, national interests continue to dominate policy choices by these nations and their leaders. Perhaps the greatest series of rebuffs to President Obama's policy efforts occurred during his trip to Asia in November 2010 (Chan, Stolberg, and Sanger 2010). At a meeting just prior to the G-20 summit, the United States and South Korea had hoped to conclude a free-trade agreement that had languished since the Bush administration. Instead, the two sides could not agree and could only insist that they would conclude the pact "in a matter of weeks." (Despite this initial

setback, though, they did reach an accord in early December 2010 to eliminate a number of important trade barriers between the two countries [Chan 2010]). Shortly afterward at the G-20 meetings, President Obama failed to get support for his proposal to stimulate global growth before working on deficit reduction from some key trading nations (e.g., China, Britain, Germany, and Brazil). He also failed to get any movement from the Chinese on its overvalued currency. Instead, several countries criticized the decision of the Federal Reserve for weakening the US dollar through pumping an additional \$600 billion into circulation (and thus potentially hurting the attractiveness of their exports). Policymakers of other nations pursuing their own interests in foreign policy—and thus disagreeing with American policy at times—is hardly surprising, but their actions suggest the limitation that a change in reputation may have on support for American policy abroad. In short, nations (both publics and their leaders) continue to disagree with American policy, albeit perhaps less vocally than during the Bush years.

INCORPORATING DOMESTIC VALUES IN FOREIGN POLICY: GUANTANAMO BAY AND THE ARAB SPRING

A second area where the Obama approach called for policy change was in the incorporation of domestic values in the conduct of American foreign policy. Indeed, President Obama noted that the United States did not need to compromise its values in carrying out its foreign policy. Rather, he argued, “in the long run we . . . cannot keep this country safe unless we enlist the power of our most fundamental values.” His implicit reference, of course, was to the Bush administration’s actions toward the treatment of suspected terrorists in seeming violation of domestic and international standards. Hence, one of his first actions as president, just two days after his inauguration, was the issuance of three executive orders to reverse some of these actions. One executive order called for the closing of overseas prisons by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the elimination of certain interrogation methods in dealing with terrorist suspects; a second directed the closing of the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay within a year’s time; and the third set up a special inter-agency task force “to identify lawful options for the disposition of individuals captured or apprehended in connection with armed conflicts and counterterrorism operations” (see Executive Orders 13491, 13492, and 13493 2009).

Despite these orders, however, the administration has been only partially successful in implementing a change in policy. The interrogation measures, based on only those outlined in the Army Field Manual, have now been adhered to, and the use of water boarding, a practice that had been used over

three hundred times during the Bush administration, no longer occurs. The full implementation of the other directives, however, has encountered difficulty, and indeed, not all aspects of the executive orders have been fully brought into effect. To be sure, CIA Director Leon Panetta announced in April 2009 that overseas prisons operated by the organization have been closed (Shane 2009a), but the transfer of prisoners to facilities operated by other countries apparently would continue, although outside “contractors” will not be used to question the suspects (“CIA Claims to Close Secret Prisons” 2009).

The effort to close the Guantanamo Bay prison facility and, in particular, to transfer its prisoners elsewhere has met with considerable resistance. While the administration was able to locate a domestic facility to take these prisoners (an empty maximum security prison in Illinois), the Congress has blocked funding to renovate that facility, fearful of housing suspected terrorists on American soil (Welna 2009). Furthermore, public opposition to the closing of the Guantanamo facility remains significant with 60 percent of the American public in a March 2010 poll supporting keeping it open (Savage 2010). The administration has also had to move back from its original position that it would transfer all detainees at Guantanamo to other prisons or put them on trial. Indeed, as early as May 2009, President Obama acknowledged that his administration would continue to use military commissions to try some prisoners held at Guantanamo, despite earlier opposition to such action, and that he did not have an answer to those “detainees at Guantanamo who cannot be prosecuted yet who pose a clear danger to the American people.” In this sense, these latter prisoners are likely to remain at Guantanamo for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, with the thwarted attacks on Christmas Day 2009 and on Times Square in May 2010, the prospects of closing Guantanamo have continued to fade, and it is now “unlikely that President Obama will fulfill his promise to close it before his term ends in 2013” (Savage 2010). Indeed, the status of indefinite detention at Guantanamo and the use of indefinite detentions were confirmed by the Obama administration in March 2011, when the president issued a new executive order confirming these policies—an order that ironically appeared directly at variance with the ones issued after his inauguration in January 2009 (Tapper and Miller 2011). Yet, one official remained upbeat about the current situation and its effect on public (and global) opinion: “Closing Guantanamo is good, but fighting to close Guantanamo is O.K. Admitting you failed would be the worst” (Savage 2010).

In contrast to its seemingly failed efforts to infuse American values into its policy in dealing with Guantanamo Bay, the administration acted much more consistently and decisively with its commitment to promoting American values with the emergence of the “Arab Spring” in early 2011. The Arab Spring referred to a groundswell of popular movements for democratic reform in

several Arab countries. The movement began in Tunisia in which the long-serving leader was ultimately forced into exile after several days of popular protests in January 2011. The movement spread to Egypt with days of public protests against the thirty-year autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak, an important U.S. ally in the Middle East peace process. The administration thus faced an important crossroads with this uprising: whether to support interests that it wanted to protect or support values that it wanted to promote. Although the administration was a bit indecisive in the opening days of the Egyptian public protests, President Obama ultimately called for the departure of President Mubarak. And indeed by mid-February 2011, Mubarak gave up his post, and an effort at democratic transition was underway in that crucial Middle Eastern country, albeit not without difficulty.

As this Arab Spring swept other states in the Middle East, the Obama administration continued to support these democratic reform efforts—sometimes more pronounced than others. The most dramatic effort by the Obama administration was in Libya and the effort by opposition forces to end the forty-year rule by Moammar Gadhafi. As protests increased and the rebel forces in Libya began to advance, Gadhafi threatened to destroy these forces, with the potential of great loss of innocent lives. President Obama undertook a series of actions to stop these efforts by Gadhafi's forces. He evacuated the American embassy and froze Gadhafi's assets in the United States (NPR 2011). Furthermore, working with allies, the administration succeeded in broadening international sanctions through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 (United Nations Security Council 2011a) against the Libyan government and imposing a "no-fly zone" over Libya through United Nations Security Council 1973 (United Nations Security Council 2011b). The latter resolution also included a provision authorizing the member states to "to take all necessary measures" to protect civilians in that country. In large measure, these actions were fully consistent with the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine endorsed by the global community in 2005 (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect 2011). As a result, the administration, as part of a NATO-led coalition, moved to enforce the UN resolution, although the United States had European nations largely take the lead. Some opposition to this administration action was voiced at home, since these analysts were not convinced that American interests were at stake in Libya. Indeed, in outlining his policy actions, President Obama (NPR 2011) argued otherwise: "To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader and—more profoundly—our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are." In this sense, President Obama's Libyan policy was carefully legitimized through its adherence to the American domestic values.

ADDRESSING KEY SECURITY ISSUES: IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, AND NORTH KOREA

The Obama administration inherited several security issues from the Bush administration, and it promised a change policy on them, as well. In dealing with the Iraq War, the administration has surely changed courses, but in addressing the Afghanistan War, it has not. On the nuclear threats from North Korea and Iran, the administration has attempted an engagement approach but with very little success so far. In all, the degree of change in either the substance or the success on the latter three issues has been limited.

Iraq

Perhaps the most important policy change that Candidate Obama promised during his campaign was to end American involvement in Iraq. He has largely succeeded in that effort. Early on, he called for ending all American combat operations by August 31, 2010, with only 50,000 trainers and advisers remaining in Iraq by that date, and he promised the withdrawal of all American forces by the end of 2011. The former goal has been achieved, and the latter seems in sight. One factor that may change these plans is the continued instability of the Iraqi government. Since March 2010 elections, the various Iraqi factions have had difficulty putting together an effective coalition government. If that situation were to continue, it may have some effect on the final drawdown of American forces. The administration, however, has already removed a great deal of American military equipment from Iraq, although the Obama administration's exact plans for American involvement in Iraq after 2011 remain unclear (Myers, Shanker, and Healy 2010, 1, 19). In all, Iraq represents a good example of the Obama approach in action and largely a departure from the Bush approach, although the 2011 withdrawal was originally negotiated by the earlier administration (Myers, Shanker, and Healy 2010, 1).

Afghanistan

If Iraq represents a movement away from the Bush approach by the Obama administration, its policy toward Afghanistan appears to be pursuing a course similar to the Bush administration's in Iraq beginning in 2007. To be sure, Candidate Obama had always said that the real threat from international terrorism was in Afghanistan and that the Bush administration had "taken its eye off the ball" with the Iraq War ("Obama to Couric" 2009). As a result, President Obama quickly committed two additional brigades to Afghanistan,

increased the number of American drone attacks against terrorist camps, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and appointed a new commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, who was ordered to conduct a review of Afghanistan policy and strategy. General McChrystal completed that review in late summer 2009, and his principal recommendation to the president was the need for a substantial increase in American military forces if there was to be a chance of success.

McChrystal's report became a source of considerable internal debate between Obama and his national security team over the next several months. At the end of this debate—in which the president believed he had only received one real option (i.e., increasing the number of American troops)—the president largely supported the military's position (see Woodward 2010). That is, he ordered thirty thousand more American troops—somewhat less than the forty thousand requested—and opted for pursuing a counterinsurgency option (as the military preferred). In ordering both the size of the troop increase and in adopting the counterinsurgency strategy, the policy choice—a “surge strategy”—seemed closely aligned to what President Bush had chosen in Iraq in early 2007. Indeed, the parallelism became complete a few months later when General McChrystal resigned (over some critical remarks about administration officials in *Rolling Stone* magazine) and was replaced by General David Petraeus, who had carried out the surge strategy in Iraq for the Bush administration. Still, some important differences did exist between the Obama surge strategy and the Bush strategy. In announcing his decision at West Point in 2009, President Obama tied the strategy to a commitment to begin withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan in July 2011. Importantly, though, he conditioned the withdrawal of forces on “taking into account conditions on the grounds.” Furthermore, this military approach was linked to a civilian strategy to enhance the effectiveness of the Afghan government and a partnership with Pakistan building on “mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual trust.”

The new military strategy was implemented with some initial success, according to the administration's one-year review (Michaels 2010). The civilian strategy within Afghanistan and the relationship with Pakistan, however, have not improved appreciably in the first year since the president's announcement. Indeed, the stability and effectiveness of the Afghan government has remained an area of concern, as has the continued ties between Pakistani military intelligence and elements supportive of the Taliban and al-Qaida. The Obama administration has now once again adjusted its timetable for American withdrawal from that conflict. The administration remains committed to transferring some security responsibility to the Afghan army during 2011 and 2012, but it will now continue the American combat mission there until 2014.

At the NATO summit in November 2010, the alliance outlined a plan to stay in Afghanistan through 2014, as well. Significantly, the similarity between the strategies in Afghanistan and in Iraq for the two administrations was acknowledged by an anonymous American official in late 2010: "Iraq is a pretty decent blueprint for how to transition in Afghanistan" (Baker and Nordland 2010).

Whether this Afghanistan timetable will be altered as a result of American covert military action in May 2011 that found and killed Osama bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda and the perpetrator of the September 11, 2001, attacks, remains unclear. In a covert operation that reportedly had been in process since August 2010, American intelligence had seemingly located the head of al-Qaeda (although the bin Laden identity had not been fully determined until the actual attack) in Abbottabad, a Pakistani city with a large military installation and academy that's close to the capital. On May 1, 2011, a contingent of American Navy Seals, supported by other forces, stormed the suspected residence, killed Osama bin Laden, and buried him in the Arabian Sea within hours.

Although this action was hailed as a major anti-terrorism success, it immediately raised doubts about the future direction of policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Would this action quicken the Obama administration's departure from Afghanistan because of increased domestic and international pressure? Since Pakistan was not informed of this American covert raid, partly due to suspicion over possible ties between the Pakistan military and intelligence forces with terrorist forces, would this rupture ties with Pakistan? Indeed, the Pakistan government protested vigorously over the intrusion into its nation's sovereignty without its permission. Further, would the discovery of Osama bin Laden in this garrison town within one mile of a Pakistan military base turn the American Congress away from the continued aid packages for Pakistan? In all, and ironically, would the future anti-terrorism policy of the Obama administration become more complicated in the months and years ahead in Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite this killing?

North Korea

In keeping with Candidate Obama's commitment to engage with adversaries rather than to confront them, President Obama followed this course with North Korea and Iran during the first two years of his administration, but he had little success with either regime with this strategy.

The Six-Party Talks (among North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and the United States) were the principal diplomatic vehicle used during the Bush administration to address the nuclear issue with North Korea. These talks went through seven different "rounds" during the Bush years with lim-

ited success, as North Korea conducted its first underground nuclear test in October 2006. By 2007, however, an apparent agreement was reached on the eventual dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear facilities in exchange for economic assistance from the United States and others, and for moving toward normalization of North Korean relations with several states, including the United States (McCormick 2010, 230–31; “Six Party Talks” 2010). In 2008, however, the implementation of that agreement became stalled as each side accused the other of not fulfilling its commitment. By early 2009, North Korea announced that it was ending its military and political agreement with South Korea (“North Korea Conducts Nuclear Test” 2009), and the seeming progress on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was halted.

A new North Korean approach was dramatically evident within the first few months of the Obama administration taking office. On virtually the same day in April 2009 that President Obama was calling for a nuclear-free world in a major foreign policy address in Prague, North Korea conducted a missile test that appeared to be a violation of earlier sanctions. A little more than a month later, North Korea conducted a second nuclear test. That action precipitated the United Nations Security Council to enact new sanctions on North Korea. These sanctions tightened restrictions on imports and exports of military-related hardware to North Korea and called on UN members “to inspect and destroy all banned cargo to and from that country—on the high seas, at seaports and airports—if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a violation” (United Nations Security Council 2009). Such inspections, however, remained voluntary on the part of states (and hence weakened their overall impact), although these sanctions were described as “unprecedented” at the time (MacAskill 2009). Near the end of 2009, the administration’s special representative for North Korean policy, Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, traveled to North Korea to try to get that country back to the Six-Party Talks, but his effort did not succeed (United States Department of State 2010).

The administration’s efforts at engaging North Korea continued to deteriorate in 2010, and as a result, the administration’s approach turned increasingly toward placing more sanctions on that regime. In March, a South Korean warship was sunk, killing some forty-six sailors. After an investigation, it was determined that North Korea was responsible for this action. In July 2010, the United Nations Security Council issued a “Presidential Statement” condemning this attack, although not specifically identifying North Korea as responsible for the incident (United Nations Security Council 2010). A short time after that, the Obama administration announced new unilateral economic sanctions against North Korea as yet another way to “tighten the financial vise” around the North Korean leadership, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the United States would not engage in negotiations with

North Korea until it agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program (Landler and Bumiller 2010). In late November, the situation had deteriorated further with the revelation that North Korea had built a new facility for processing uranium (Sanger 2010) and with the North Korean shelling of a South Korean island, killing both civilian and military personnel (McDonald 2010). In all, the Obama administration's effort at engaging the North Koreans, and using increased bilateral and multilateral sanctions to prod them to return to negotiations, had not succeeded in its first two years as measured by one important indicator: no new rounds of the Six-Party Talks were held in 2009 or 2010. Indeed, the North Koreans have been seeking such a meeting, but the Obama administration, reminiscent of the Bush administration approach, has declined until North Korea's behavior changes (Landler 2010).

Iran

A similar lack of progress has occurred in efforts to engage Iran diplomatically over its nuclear ambitions. Over the past decade, Iran has been subject to numerous critical reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) due to its failure to adhere fully to the safeguards agreement required under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Bush administration was initially reluctant to engage in direct talks with Iran and instead sought to isolate and sanction the regime (including three rounds of sanctions passed by the United Nations Security Council). By 2006, the Bush administration did participate in the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom) talks with Iran and offered Iran a series of incentives for cooperating with the IAEA and for forgoing its enrichment and reprocessing activities (Arms Control Association 2010). No breakthrough occurred, however.

Nonetheless, the Obama administration sought to build on this diplomatic start. American officials met with Iran through the P5+1 process in October 2009, albeit without notable success. Similarly, an offer by the United States, France, and Russia to provide a plan for providing nuclear fuel assemblies for its research reactor with international safeguards was not accepted by Iran. Instead, Iran continued its nuclear enrichment activities. As a result, the Obama administration turned to impose additional sanctions on that country in an effort to isolate it internationally.

By the middle of 2010, the Obama administration succeeded in getting several additional sanctions placed on Iran. First, the United Nations Security Council passed a fourth set of sanctions against Iran in early June (MacFarquhar 2010b). These sanctions largely focused on military, trade, and financial actions taken by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards in Iran, since this group

plays a key role in the country's nuclear program. Second, the administration also obtained new unilateral American sanctions through congressional legislation later that month (Cornwell 2010). Those sanctions endeavored to restrict foreign banks that deal with Iranian banks or with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards from gaining access to the American financial system and sought to restrict gasoline suppliers from providing much-needed fuel to Iran (despite an abundance of oil, Iran has limited refining capacity). Finally, the European Union in late July 2010 imposed an additional series of economic sanctions on Iran (Castle 2010). Such sanctions were particularly important, since the EU has such a large amount of trade with Iran.

According to the administration's strategy, these sanctions were to alter Iran's "cost-benefit" calculation in pursuing nuclear weapons development. By seeking to engage Iran, promoting a norm of nuclear nonproliferation, and imposing economic sanctions, the administration sought to compel Iran to agree to negotiations over its nuclear weapons ambitions. In late summer of 2010, President Obama insisted that this approach was working (Ambinder 2010), although no immediate negotiations were forthcoming. Near the end of the year, however, some movement appeared as a meeting between the P5+1 and Iran was scheduled for early December. The prospects of a real breakthrough at such a meeting, however, looked dim. The more likely outcome was for continued stalemate between the two sides ("Official: Iran, West Agree on Timing of Nuke Talks" 2010; Dahl 2010). Moreover, the December meeting in Geneva produced exactly that result, although the two sides agreed to meet again in Istanbul, Turkey, in January of 2011 (Erlanger 2010), but the meeting, too, did not produce a breakthrough.

CONFRONTING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The administration's engagement efforts in seeking progress to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has produced a bit more movement than those with North Korea and Iran, but no significant breakthrough has occurred so far. When the Obama administration assumed office, discussions between the two parties had broken off after an Israeli military offensive against Gaza in late 2008 in which at least fourteen hundred people were killed, some five thousand injured, and numerous homes, schools, and other buildings destroyed (UN News Service 2010). As a result, prospects for any direct talks between the two parties were slim, and the new Obama administration decided to pursue a different tack in the short term.

Embracing the Bush administration's Middle East goal of creating a two-state solution to the conflict, the Obama administration's initial strategy was

to propose the use of "proximity talks" with the Israelis and Palestinians as a vehicle to restart direct negotiations (Prasher 2010). Under the proximity proposal, the United States, and particularly Senator George Mitchell, the US Middle East envoy, would meet with the Israelis and the Palestinians separately and seek to improve the "atmosphere for negotiations" between the parties as a way of moving back to direct negotiations between the parties (United States Department of State 2009b). Both parties eventually agreed to the American proposal, and proximity talks went on for several months, albeit not without difficulties, especially over Israel building settlements on land seized in the Six-Day War. Nonetheless, the administration's persistence paid off. On September 1, 2010, President Obama was able to announce that direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians would be resumed (Obama 2010). The parties also informed the president that they thought they could complete their negotiations within one year. In these negotiations, the Israelis and Palestinians would have responsibility for them, but the Obama administration would continue to assist them in their discussions.

Even as these negotiations were being launched, though, skepticism remained over the prospect for success. That skepticism increased as the Israeli government announced in early November 2010 that it would build thirteen hundred new housing units in East Jerusalem. This announcement brought condemnation from the United States, and the Palestinian negotiator charged that such action was "destroying the peace process" (Mitnick 2010a). A few days later, the Israeli government announced that it was freezing settlements for three months as part of a bargain for military aid and diplomatic support from the United States (Mitnick 2010b), although that deal was later abandoned by the Obama administration (De Young 2010). Instead, the administration reverted to the use of "indirect talks" between the parties by Middle East Envoy George Mitchell, an approach initially adopted by the administration at the beginning of its term ("U.S. Tries Indirect Peace Tactic" 2010). In this sense, the Middle East peace efforts had come full circle in two years, without notable success.

RESTARTING RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

One area where the Obama administration achieved foreign policy success was in improving relations with Russia. From the beginning of its term, the administration focused on this relationship, and it has succeeded in advancing both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Russia. The center of this reset effort was the signing of the New START Treaty in April 2010, but several other cooperative efforts also mark the relationship during the first two

years of the Obama administration. In this sense, relations with Russia mark a significant change in policy substance and in policy success as compared to the Bush years.

By the end of the Bush administration, American relations with Russia had deteriorated, in part over the American (and NATO-endorsed) decision on deploying a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic and over the Russian intervention into the South Ossetia region of Georgia in the summer of 2008 ("NATO to Back US Missile Defence" 2008; "Russia's Medvedev Hails 'Comrade' Obama" 2009). The Russians saw the missile defense system aimed at them, rather than at Iran, as argued by the Bush administration, and the Americans saw the Russian actions in Georgia as an effort to undermine the independence of the former Soviet republic. In this wary political environment between these two powers, the Obama administration nevertheless set out to reset relations with Russia.

The first meeting between President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev occurred at the G-20 meeting in London in April 2009 and produced immediate results. Medvedev characterized Obama as "totally different" from Bush and noted the positive nature of their exchanges. Obama noted "real differences" with Russia on some important issues, but he acknowledged that there was "a broad set of common interests that we can pursue" ("Russia's Medvedev Hails 'Comrade' Obama" 2009). Significantly, both leaders issued a statement that they would begin negotiations on a new agreement "on reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms to replace the START Treaty" (White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2009d), and President Obama agreed to visit Moscow the following July.

At that July summit, Presidents Obama and Medvedev took further steps to improve the relationship. The two leaders announced the creation of a Bilateral Presidential Commission between Russia and the United States. This commission would consist of thirteen different working groups. The initial working groups ranged widely—from ones focused on nuclear energy and nuclear security, arms control and international security, foreign policy and fighting terrorism to others focused on energy and the environment, health, space cooperation, and educational and cultural exchanges. Importantly, too, Obama and Medvedev also announced that Russia and America would work on cooperative efforts to address the issue of defense against the proliferation of ballistic missiles (see White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2009b, 2009c, and the United States Department of State 2009a on the commission and ballistic missile defense).

In mid-September 2009, the Obama administration announced an important change in the Bush administration's European missile defense plan. Under the revised Obama missile plan, the United States would not station radars

in the Czech Republic or place ten ballistic missile interceptors in Poland. Instead the administration decided on a ten-year phased deployment of missile defense, beginning with a sea-based deployment and a transportable radar surveillance system. The target of this new missile defense plan would be short- and medium-range missiles, particularly those under development by Iran, with less focus on long-range missiles from that country (White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2009a). This change was seen by some as a concession to Russia, since such a system could be viewed as less threatening to Russia than the Bush plan, although the Russian response was somewhat mixed to this change (see Young 2009).

The cooperative relationship continued over the next year, and by June 2010, on the occasion of President Medvedev's visit to the White House, the Obama administration issued a "reset" fact sheet lauding the extent of cooperation between the two nations (White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2010). And, indeed, there were numerous bilateral and multilateral actions that the United States and Russia had addressed. On bilateral issues, the United States and Russia worked on moving Russia toward accession in the World Trade Organization; collaborated on addressing the global financial crisis; agreed to a new energy initiative; pursued military cooperation (including allowing ground and air transit of forces and supplies bound for Afghanistan through Russian territory); and fostered state-to-state cooperation to promote more open governance, democracy, and human rights. On multilateral issues, the United States and Russia cooperated on passing a new set of sanctions on Iran through the UN Security Council (and, in accord with that resolution, Russia agreed not to ship S-300 missiles to Iran), approving a new sanctioning resolution through the United Nations over North Korea's second nuclear test, pursuing stability and the restoration of democracy in Kyrgyzstan after the violence there in summer 2010, and developing some "confidence building" measures over dealing with Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia.

All of these efforts (including numerous nongovernmental activities) reflect the change in the Russian-American relationship, but none appeared as crucial in reestablishing this relationship as the New START Treaty. This treaty (with its name a play on words to convey the changing ties) would require Russia and the United States to reduce their deployed nuclear delivery vehicles (intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and long-range bombers) by about 50 percent from the previous limit in the 1991 START Treaty (see McCormick 2010, 166) to eight hundred in total, with a maximum of seven hundred such vehicles deployed (New START Treaty 2010). It would also require each side to reduce the number of nuclear warheads to 1,550. Such a total would represent a reduction of about 30 percent from the maximum level allowed under the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT)

of 2002 (Arms Control Association 2002). The Obama administration viewed this treaty as not only important in improving the bilateral relationship but also as important in advancing its larger nuclear nonproliferation goal. By the end of 2010, the US Senate had recommended ratification of this treaty, and this centerpiece of Obama's US-Russian and nonproliferation agenda had become a notable foreign policy success for the administration.

INITIATING GLOBAL COMMON ISSUES

In addition to American-Russian relations, global common issues have also been an important area where the Obama administration has moved beyond the agenda of the previous administration with its own initiatives. Nuclear nonproliferation, global financial reform, and climate change represent especially new departures by the Obama administration, but policy success with these initiatives remains elusive so far.

Nonproliferation

Although the New START Treaty represents one aspect of the Obama administration's nonproliferation activities, the administration has a much broader agenda in this area. The administration is pursuing at least three other initiatives to promote nuclear nonproliferation. The first involves the Obama administration's new directives on when nuclear weapons would be used by the United States. Specifically, the administration committed the United States to refraining from using nuclear weapons against those nonnuclear states that are parties to the NPT and those states that are fully in compliance with NPT requirements. If these nonnuclear states were to utilize biological and chemical weapons against the United States, the American response would generally be with conventional weapons (although a slight opening remains for a nuclear response in exceptional cases). Toward nuclear weapons states and those states not in compliance with the NPT, the potential use of nuclear weapons would remain, but such use would occur "only in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, our allies and partners" (*Nuclear Posture Review Report* 2010, ix; *Nuclear Posture Review Briefing* 2010). In essence, then, the administration was seeking to move toward a more stable nuclear-use policy and encourage other states in this direction as well.

The second initiative was President Obama's decision to convene the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April 2010 with forty-seven countries in attendance. The goal of that summit was to address how best "to prevent terrorist, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring

nuclear materials" that may be available today. The summit ended with a communiqué, a commitment to meet this goal within four years, a work plan for the future, and an agreement to meet again in 2012 ("Communiqué of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit" 2010). All of these commitments, however, were voluntary, and some potential or existing nuclear states (e.g., Iran and North Korea) and potential proliferators were not invited ("The Nuclear Security Summit" 2010). Still, this initiative is an important first step, and it remains largely a work in progress.

The third initiative focused on a reaffirmation of the world's commitment to nonproliferation at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Review Conference. After some four weeks of debate and discussion among the conferees in May 2010, the review meeting did announce two important agreements: the 189 signatories to the NPT reaffirmed their commitment to it, and the parties agreed to a 2012 deadline for a Middle East conference to address unconventional weapons in that part of the world (MacFarquhar 2010a). Although the Middle East conference actually taking place seems doubtful in light of the ongoing conflict in that region, the reaffirmation of the NPT provides important support for the Obama administration's efforts to advance its nuclear nonproliferation agenda.

Financial Reform

Global financial reform was a second global commons initiative advanced by the Obama administration. This initiative was driven in large part by the difficult economic environment that President Obama inherited as he assumed the presidency. The goal of this reform is to create a sounder financial system by standardizing banking regulations and regulating the various investment instruments used worldwide. The principal forum that the Obama administration has been using to make progress on this issue has been the G-20 summits. The American effort actually began with the G-20 Washington Summit in late 2008 at the end of the Bush administration, but it has been continued at the subsequent G-20 summits in London and Pittsburgh in 2009 and in Toronto and Seoul in 2010. A global framework has now been outlined to regulate global banking capital and reserve requirements, as noted at the G-20 Summit in Seoul, but the new framework will only start to be implemented in 2013. Importantly, though, the framework will still need to be incorporated into national law by the states involved. Further, there remain other areas of work, as well, such as developing a common framework on dealing with financial institutions that are "too big to fail" and protecting taxpayers from bearing these costs (see "Complete Text: G-20 Seoul Communiqué" 2010). Finally, differences remain over the regulation of some financial instruments,

such as hedge funds, with the European states seeking much greater control of such instruments than the United States (Schneider and Cho 2010).

Climate Change

American policy on climate change under the Obama administration further represents a significant change from the Bush administration. Indeed, the administration came to office with a substantial commitment to lead international environmental change and took a number of initial steps at home to promote that agenda. Early on, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2009a) appointed a special envoy for climate change as a way to advance this agenda within the government. The administration also advanced a "green jobs" agenda at home, included some \$80 billion in the 2009 stimulus package to address energy issues, and announced new emission standards for new vehicles built for 2017 through 2025 (Stern 2010). Further, the administration was successful in getting the House of Representatives (although not the Senate) to pass a "cap-and-trade" bill, which would have imposed mandatory limits on the emission of greenhouse gases and encouraged the use of cleaner energy sources for the future (Carey 2009).

With these domestic initiatives in place, the administration seemed well positioned to argue for significant global reform at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009. Yet, this was not to be. President Obama personally attended the meeting of 192 countries, and he worked tirelessly to broker the divide between developed and developing countries on an international accord or even a commitment to a legally binding agreement. What was ultimately achieved was a three-page agreement among China, India, Brazil, and South Africa in which a commitment was made to assist developing countries in adapting to climate change (\$30 billion a year through 2012, and a total of \$100 billion by 2020). Further, a commitment was also made to limit the increase in the global temperature to below two degrees Celsius. Yet, these commitments were political statements only, and they did not include any means of enforcement. Although President Obama contended that the agreement was a "breakthrough," he also acknowledged that "this progress alone is not enough" (Broder 2009).

As the Obama administration moved to the next scheduled international conference on climate change in Cancun, Mexico, in late November to mid-December 2010, the prospects for success did not appear bright. The outcome of that meeting was described as "modest," although sufficient to continue the international effort in the year ahead (Broder 2010). Still, environmental legislation is highly unlikely with the new political composition of the US House and Senate, and it appears unlikely that the United States can meet its

financial obligations to aid the developing countries in light of the large budget deficits and economic problems at home. Nonetheless, prior to the Cancun meeting, the administration's special envoy for climate change pledged to press forward with its agenda (Eilperin 2010), and afterward, this envoy described Cancun as "a significant step forward that builds on the progress made in Copenhagen" (Broder 2010). In all, though, success with this initiative remains extremely modest.

CONCLUSION

The Obama administration came to office promising foreign policy change, but the degree of change so far has been limited. In outlining a liberal-internationalist foreign policy approach, the Obama administration has surely achieved change from the approach followed by the Bush administration. In seeking to implement that approach—whether evaluated through the changes in the substance of American policy or through the achievements that it has had—the Obama administration has had much less success. In this sense, continuity in several foreign policy arenas remains more prevalent than change during the first two years of the Obama administration.

Indeed, several areas reflect considerable continuity. For instance, the Obama administration made an initial attempt to infuse domestic values into foreign policy with its three executive orders on the treatment of terrorist suspects, but the most visible symbol of the Bush policy—Guantanamo Bay—remains open and military commissions continue, as well. President Obama's personal popularity initially softened America's image abroad as compared to the Bush years, but that new "soft power" has not been translated very easily into support for American foreign policy. Further, on major security issues, with the exception of ending the Iraq War, the Obama administration's policy reflects more continuity than change—whether addressing the Afghanistan War, the Middle East, or the nuclear threats from North Korea and Iran. Indeed, the strategy of engagement with North Korea and Iran has not yielded success; instead, relations with both countries appear to have eroded.

Still, the Obama administration has initiated some substantive foreign policy changes, and in at least one area, it has achieved notable success. The Obama administration has begun to address a number of global common issues with new policy approaches—whether global financial reform, climate change, or nuclear nonproliferation. The degree of success in each of these areas remains unclear, but these policies do represent new departures from the Bush years. Finally, and importantly, Obama's strategy of engagement with Russia has had a substantial effect in improving that relationship and a

New START Treaty is a crucial consequence of the “reset” in relations with that country.

In all, though, these foreign policy results are modest, especially for a “big bang presidency,” as Steven Schier characterizes the Obama administration’s approach to the office in the introduction to this volume. In this sense, the Obama administration’s foreign policy is still largely a “work in progress,” as one analysis described it (Pershing 2010), or one with lots of “big ideas” but one short on implementation, as another summarized it (Ignatius 2010). Yet, the Obama administration will find the political landscape over the next two years hardly favorable for implementing its foreign policy approach. With the shift to Republican control of the US House of Representatives and the lessening of Democratic control in the US Senate after the 2010 congressional elections, and with the increasingly threatening international environment—whether from the difficulties in the Afghan War, a more assertive North Korea, or the continuing actions of Iran (or perhaps elsewhere)—the administration will likely find it difficult to continue its liberal internationalist agenda, much as the Clinton administration found after the 1994 congressional elections. In this sense, foreign policy change may be in the air for the Obama administration, but perhaps not in the way that it had originally intended.

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