



# Advice to President Obama

Barack Obama will be flooded with advice on the many crucial matters that he must face as 44th President of the United States, as will the new Congress. Here we offer a few fresh ideas, succinctly stated, on issues ranging from security strategy to the financial crisis to human rights. The advice is offered by scholars affiliated with the MIT Center for International Studies (CIS), and draws on their deep knowledge and experience.

## Getting Asia Right

By Richard J. Samuels  
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While most western eyes have been fixed on the Middle East, the tectonic plates beneath the world's potentially most unstable region have shifted. Asia is home to most of the world's fastest growing economies and much of its defense spending. China, India, and Japan loom largest, and the Koreans are not far behind. Each has a territorial dispute with one or more of the others, and all have fought costly wars within living memory.

Most eyes in the region, meanwhile, have been fixed on the relative decline of the United States. Despite how the United States has supplied stability to the region and despite rhetoric about how it remains an "indispensable partner," there is open discussion in Asian capitals of an inevitable "erosion of the East Asian balance of power," of U.S. "abandonment," of "accommodation to China's rise," and of the "failure of extended deterrence."

If the "use by" date of the Cold War "hub and spoke" security architecture is passing, what sort of new architecture makes sense? Since a NATO-like multilateral balancing alliance would require the rise of a China that looks far more threatening to far more regional actors than it does today, a containing "Arc of Freedom and Democracy" is unattractive. A regional security community modeled on the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe

(OSCE) is more attractive. The Six Party Talks, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum seem like prototypes.

But in security affairs, as in "wing walking," one never lets go with one hand until having a firm grasp with the other. Until these prototypes produce a shared security vision and agreement on borders, we'd be wise to begin by shoring up and transforming what we know has worked: the U.S.-Japan alliance. Both countries need to be more "normal." Japan should reduce its moral hazard and spend more than .9% of GDP on defense; it must also commit to the defense of the United States. The United States should welcome a more equal partnership with Japan, recognize its sovereignty, and accept when it says "no" to entanglement in our wars. Together, Tokyo and Washington must recommit to stabilizing the great power quadrilateral in Northeast Asia without creating a hostile China, alienating the Republic of Korea, or further isolating North Korea. This will perforce provide stronger reassurance and generate substantively enhanced multilateral institutions.

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## Name a European SACEUR



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The U.S. needs, but has not received, meaningful military contributions from its NATO allies, now and in the immediate future. Reform efforts in NATO since the end of the Cold War have produced neither a broad and sustained allied will to fight, nor the forces to do so. European nations contribute just enough to the alliance to keep the U.S. interested, and not enough to solve any big problems. NATO needs reform at the very highest level to ensure a greater European sense of responsibility. NATO has a civilian Secretary General from a European member state, and a Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), a four-star general from the United States. When NATO goes to war, as in Kosovo or Afghanistan, the U.S. SACEUR is living proof that the U.S. will make the necessary contributions toward a NATO success. The U.S., not NATO, owns the fight. This should cease. A European officer should now fill the role of SACEUR, with a U.S. officer as the deputy.

The combined pressures of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have taxed U.S. ground forces to the limit. The U.S. does not now have enough forces in Afghanistan, despite the fact that nearly half of U.S. forces are in the field worldwide, an unsustainable operational tempo. Though a drawdown in Iraq will free some forces for Afghanistan, these units deserve and require a rest.

NATO includes many of the world's richest countries. On paper, the European member countries have two million soldiers under arms, and spend almost \$300 billion per year on defense. In Afghanistan, a war with which the allies concurred, they contribute roughly 30,000 soldiers, about the same number as the U.S. Critically, however, European states contribute their forces with "caveats," strictures that limit their use—half of them as a matter of national policy stay out of those parts of Afghanistan where the fight with the Taliban is most intense. And European countries do not always send all the needed equipment. More forces are needed now, but all seem to expect them to come from the U.S.

The Obama administration should propose a radical change. SACEUR should be a European. This serves three important purposes: First, when NATO is at war, European publics will hear from a European general or admiral as to why things are going badly or well. They will be made to feel that it is their fight and that they have a responsibility for the outcome. Second, European states will vie for the honor of NATO command. To win the honor their militaries will have to be strong and effective. The obvious winners now would be France or Britain, the most militarily capable states. Germany and Italy would have to do more to compete for the honor. Third, and most important, giving this position to a European puts the other NATO members on notice. The U.S. will have one foot out the door of the alliance. Failure to perform may precipitate a complete U.S. exit. If NATO is no longer a useful military alliance, the U.S. should make other arrangements.

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## Pursue Real Diplomacy Toward Iran



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American success in policy toward Iran requires both a sense of urgency and patience. With each passing month, Iran builds more centrifuges—facts on the ground that become more difficult to reverse the longer the nuclear dispute remains unresolved. Iran is still years away from an ability to manufacture a nuclear weapon, but it is getting better at developing, constructing, and operating centrifuges.

President Obama should consider **1)** maintaining sanctions and containment, which keeps pressure on Iran and provides something to offer in negotiations; **2)** restructuring and or reducing democracy promotion, threat of force, and covert operations, whose use runs the gamut from counter-productive to highly risky; and **3)** augmenting diplomacy.

The president should consider appointing a special envoy for Iran who could directly talk with the Iranians and coordinate and rationalize the multiple points of engagement—e.g., the P5+1, the Tripartite Iraq talks, the IAEA, US-Iran bilateral discussions.

On the nuclear issue, the U.S. may want to continue to push for zero centrifuges on Iranian soil, but it should be prepared to offer a bigger incentive (e.g., normalized relations) and a bigger disincentive. The current range of incentives and disincentives (WTO membership, energy investment, bank and export credits sanctions, targeting of particular individuals and firms, etc.) has not proved compelling and is unlikely to induce Iran to reverse a very public commitment to Iranian enrichment on Iranian soil.

Accordingly, U.S. negotiators must have a fully developed, credible, non-zero alternative and a game plan for when and how to introduce and pursue such an option. The non-zero options include a multinational or multilateral consortium, an Iranian program capped at some level, and an acceptance of Iranian enrichment in principle but not until a future date commensurate with the size of its reactor inventory.

The U.S. can impose costs on Iran, but it cannot impose its will. Progress requires a greater focus on strategy rather than tactics. The U.S. needs a realistic theory of “victory,” that is, a strategy that will result in an Iran without nuclear weapons and that plays a constructive role in Iraq. Unlike past U.S. policy toward Iran, this strategy has to be realistic: it should not require complete Iranian capitulation in order to have any chance of success.

During this initial period, the U.S. government would also do well to turn down the volume on its public pronouncements concerning Iran. When dealing with a proud nation, strong rhetoric can produce intransigent behavior, especially if it reverberates through an election campaign. Lowering the profile, at least initially, will give the policy actors in both countries more room to participate in serious negotiations in the fall.

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## Restore U.S. Leadership

by William J. Fallon

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I suggest that the president-elect articulate a strategic vision for the nation in which he outlines his view of the desired position of the U.S. in the world and how we might achieve it. He might outline the priority relationships between the U.S. and other nations as well as some key goals and objectives. It will be important to build into this vision an assessment mechanism and measures of effectiveness, as well as a description of the necessary resources and their availability.

I believe that the essential foundation to any success in the world must begin with improvements to the domestic situation. We need a broadly better educated population which freely contributes, across the board, to the collective good of the nation. This will require extraordinarily focused and successful leadership to redirect attention from self interest to the common good. The material accumulation and consumption-oriented behavior of our society is increasingly self-destructive and harmful to ourselves and others in the world. Changed behaviors in this critical area would likely result in recovery from the current financial crisis, improved environmental conditions worldwide, and reduced competition for resources.

Reestablishing confidence in U.S. leadership would be my top recommendation in the realm of international affairs. The world relies on U.S. moral, political, economic and military strength as an example and the means to stability and security. The longstanding willingness of the American people to step up and lead for the good of people throughout the world could again be demonstrated. We have been blessed above all other nations; it is our responsibility to act in a manner appropriate to these blessings.

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## Change Course in Afghanistan



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President Obama is inheriting a dreadful situation in Afghanistan: the Taliban have taken control of large swathes of the country; the government of Hamid Karzai is awash in corruption and a growing number of Afghans see the United States as an alien power. The war in Afghanistan has entered its eighth year. Without decisive action, it could be lost.

President Obama should move rapidly on two fronts. The first is security. Although he has promised to commit additional combat forces to Afghanistan, this will not be enough. He should order his diplomats and field commanders to embark on negotiations with whatever groups of the Taliban are willing to reciprocate. The Taliban is not a monolithic organization, but a galaxy of groups that vary in size, loyalties and degrees of cohesion. If Obama moves quickly and with savvy, he can exploit the fissures in the movement and neutralize many of the individual groups without turning to force.

Of course, some Taliban commanders, such as Al Qaeda members and non-Afghan jihadis, will refuse to talk. They will spurn the olive branch, and will have to be confronted, and possibly, eliminated. Here, too, President Obama must change course. To date, American strategy has relied far too heavily on airstrikes, which have too often missed their targets and killed civilians, thereby alienating the very people we are trying to help. To reduce our reliance on airpower, the United States will need to deploy more troops on the ground. In the short term, President Obama should augment the number of American troops in the country. But more importantly, he should step up the training of the Afghan army, which has received far less attention than it deserves, and compel them, over time, to take on a larger share of the burden.

But counter-insurgencies are not won by force alone. They are won by convincing the civilian population that the government in charge is able to provide order in the streets—and that it can deliver good government honestly and efficiently. To that end, the Obama administration should compel Afghanistan's leaders to confront the rampant corruption in their ranks, or risk losing American support. As a start, President Obama should insist that

Prime Minister Karzai dismiss any minister who is unable or unwilling to carry out the decisions of the Afghan cabinet, and fire anyone whose ability to perform has been significantly degraded by accusations or the reality of corruption. For seven years, the United States has been doing the bulk of the fighting against the Taliban, and paying for most of its government. President Obama should start insisting that America gets something in return.

The last phase is the most important. As American and Afghan forces re-establish order over parts of the country, President Obama should flood these areas with aid and infrastructure projects to win over ordinary Afghans. Without providing order first, trying to provide aid and infrastructure won't work. But merely killing and neutralizing the Taliban—without giving the Afghans reasons to support their government—won't work, either. In the long run, the war will be won by depriving the Taliban of its base of support—those ordinary Afghans who want order and a better life.

This is the way forward. With savvy, determination and a new approach, President Obama can still prevail in Afghanistan. But time is short.

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## Think Out of the Box on the Middle East



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Thinking about the Middle East in general, and Israel-Palestine in particular, has always been thinking in the proverbial box. That box has isolated particular problem-situations—Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, etc.—as needing pinpointed resolution, and sees the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a priority. Subsequently, the box has included U.S. support for localized Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and U.S. discouragement of any Israeli-Syrian contact. Thinking out of the box (as begun by the Baker-Hamilton commission) is a necessary condition for progress, for change, in the Middle East.

The Middle East must be addressed at the macro-level, with the undue attention traditionally given to Israel-Palestine disposed of (gently and diplomatically perhaps) in favor of an all-inclusive approach. Two implementations of this proposed mind-set are immediate, especially given the fortuitous timing of elections in Israel coming up less than a month after the new U.S. president's inauguration:

**a)** Since negotiations between Israel and Palestine, though touted as being a “peace process,” have gone nowhere and will continue to meander, they should be replaced by American pressure—not a dirty word—based on the Arab Peace Initiative. The fulcrum here is all the Arab states, changing the focus of the discussion from the familiar issues that have been regurgitated ad nauseam (borders, Jerusalem, refugees) to a comprehensive settlement, which takes the region forward to all-encompassing mutual relations. Previous worries in the box—usually buttressed by AIPAC—about Israeli recalcitrance or American Jewish opposition have been sufficiently refuted by polls here and in Israel to make this policy move feasible and welcome.

**b)** Just as realistic, and even more crucial, is bringing Syria into the fold of dialogue, thereby strengthening its longitudinal pragmatic dimension (Turkey-Lebanon-Israel-Jordan-Egypt) over its latitudinal extremist axis (Iran-Iraq-Hezbollah-Hamas). There is a double effect here, residing in both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the more general West-Islam conundrum (not to be identified with each other), which reinforces the fresh idea of tackling the Middle East in whole.

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## Create a West Bank Security Force



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The single most consequential and forward-looking policy President Obama could adopt for the future of the Middle East would be to come down in support of a temporary international military force for deployment to the West Bank. Israelis skeptical about the peace process argue that they have no partner, but the matter is more immediately one of Palestinian capacity than it is one of will power. In areas where the current U.S. security mission to the West Bank has teamed up with carefully vetted teams of Palestinian Authority security officials, such as in Jenin, Nablus, and now Hebron, it has demonstrated convincing successes. Now is the time to take this effort to the next level.



Abu Mazen, Javier Solana, and now Obama's pick for national security adviser, James L. Jones, have each issued statements indicating support for such an idea. Although Israelis of all stripes know that the two-state solution is their only strategic option, they are terrified that any international force will look like the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)—toothless observers rather than the tough-nosed enforcers that are truly needed.

The Israelis can probably be brought on board but would require presidential-level assurances that such an international force could take responsibility for the entire West Bank security file, including intensive and proactive anti-terrorism operations, while a professional Palestinian security service is being trained. The president would have to guarantee a dominant U.S. role, demand unprecedented rules of engagement from any potential European partners, and deploy a force numbering in the tens of thousands.

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## Reform Financial Regulation



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When President Obama takes the oath of office in January, the nation's banks and other financial institutions will undoubtedly be in terrible shape. The administration should seize the opportunity to press forward on financial regulatory reform. The patchwork of regulatory agencies should be consolidated, financial holding companies should be subject to uniform prudential oversight, and capital requirements should be re-evaluated to ensure that financial institutions can sustain themselves during future economic downturns.

Today, banks are regulated by the Federal Reserve, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Office of Thrift Supervision, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the National Credit Union Administration, and fifty state regulators. This fragmented structure leads inevitably to rivalries between regulators, conflicts of interest, and holes in supervision. The Obama administration should push forward immediately with agency consolidation. The Treasury Department's regulatory blueprint from early 2008 contains many constructive ideas for moving forward.

Financial holding companies are responsible for much of today's financial turmoil. The holding company of AIG accumulated an enormous and ill-fated portfolio of derivatives but faced only minimal regulatory oversight. Similarly, the holding companies of the previously independent investment banks engaged in excessive risk-taking that would be prohibited if undertaken by their strictly regulated subsidiaries. The lesson is clear: financial holding companies of all types should not be allowed to escape oversight by an appropriate regulatory agency.

Finally, new thinking is needed on the issue of bank capital requirements. Current rules require banks to hoard capital as the economy weakens. Such actions work against government actions to stimulate the economy. The regulatory agencies—newly consolidated by the Obama administration—should develop countercyclical requirements that encourage banks to accumulate capital during economic booms and extend more credit during economic downturns.

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## Improve Resource Allocation for Statecraft and Security



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Leaders on both sides of the political aisle emphasize the importance of employing a wide range of domestic and international tools—including diplomacy, foreign assistance, intelligence, and homeland security measures as well as the military—to improve national security. Yet seven years after 9/11, no Executive Branch document links strategy and resources across these interrelated tools.

The Obama administration should strengthen the linkages between strategy and resources in these vital areas by instituting a Quadrennial National Security Review (QNSR). The QNSR would establish top-down priorities for national defense, homeland security, and international affairs, within budgetary constraints. It would draw genuine long-term links between the strategy articulated and the resources the administration plans to devote to these areas.

The QNSR should start with the administration's overarching strategy; articulate a prioritized list of critical missions; and identify the major federal programs, infrastructure, and budget plan that will be required to implement the strategy successfully. The review should inform the administration's fiscal guidance to federal departments and agencies. Cabinet secretaries and agency heads with roles in national defense, homeland security, and international affairs should be directed to use the QNSR to inform their planning and resource allocation processes.

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## Meet with Medvedev

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The Russia agenda for the new administration is long and difficult. Russia, determined to restore its superpower status and bolstered by petrodollars, has watered down sanctions against Iran, suspended the Comprehensive Forces in Europe treaty, used its energy resources to punish recalcitrant former Soviet states, invaded Georgia, and threatened to deploy Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad. Indeed, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's attempt to intimidate Europe and the U.S. with the Iskanders was a bid to challenge the U.S. directly and to ensure that Russia did not slip off the foreign policy agenda. The Obama administration need not tackle these issues all at once, but it must move quickly to halt the downward spiral of U.S.-Russian relations.

Shortly after the inauguration, President Obama should invite President Medvedev to the White House. Time is of the essence. First, the Russian public and the elites in the Kremlin resent the humiliation they suffered after the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially at the hands of the Bush administration. The proposed summit would signal respect and consultation. Second, the Russian economy is suffering from the dramatic decline in the price of oil and the global financial crisis. Will Russia be tempted by adventurism—in the short- to medium-term—before it is further weakened? Reaching out now may lessen that temptation. Third, it is important to ensure that arms control negotiations begin in earnest because the START treaty that reduced strategic nuclear weapons will expire at the end of 2009.

There will be those who argue that any overture to Russia is a mistake, that Russia should be punished for its ambitions and actions. The contrary is true. It is important to engage Moscow now to establish a framework for relations that can contain the disagreements over serious issues like Iran and NATO expansion. A summit close to the beginning of Obama's term is a step in that direction. The Kremlin has already mooted the possibility of a meeting and thus would seem to welcome it. The opportunity must not be lost.

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## Manage the Mexico-U.S. Border



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Over the last decade, America's 2,000-mile long southern border has become the source of intense political scrutiny and debate. Each day, almost one million people and one billion dollars worth of goods cross the border; the vast majority of these crossings are legal and unproblematic. At the same time, trafficking in drugs and guns, escalating violence on the Mexican side of the border, and undocumented migration create the impression of a lawless frontier.

President Obama will inherit these problems, along with the controversies they generate. What should his administration do?

The central problem in border management is how to prevent contraband and criminals from entering the country without stifling legitimate trade and transit. It is impossible—and will never be possible—to inspect every vehicle, cargo container, and individual coming from Mexico. Erecting physical barriers, such as walls and fences, imposes billions of dollars of costs on consumers and wreaks havoc on local communities, many of whose residents cross the border daily. At this point, there is little evidence that recent efforts to impose ever-more comprehensive screening of travelers at crossing the border has actually enhanced security, but they have led to wait times that, on average, exceed two hours. Non-invasive inspection technologies can only partially alleviate congestion at crossing points.

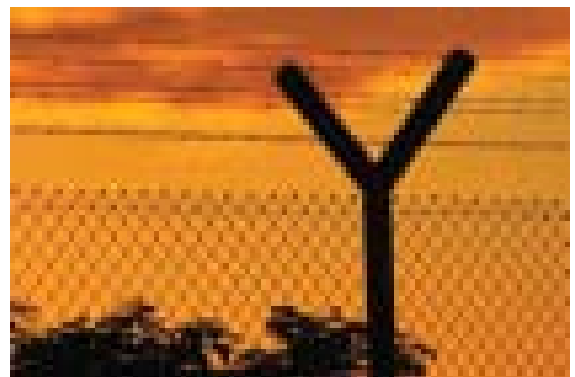
Law enforcement agencies should concentrate their energies on the smaller number of high-risk subjects. This means radically expanding the number of people who are permitted to cross the border without search and moving many cargo inspections away from crowded ports and crossing points. It also means not overburdening the legal system with thousands of cases of small-scale smuggling. "Small fry" (e.g., so-called "mules" caught with small amounts of drugs) should be detained, questioned, and repatriated but not prosecuted in the U.S. Instead, their biometric information should be disseminated to law enforcement agencies on

both sides of the border; they should be permanently barred from entry into the U.S.; and their family members should be denied access to programs that allow them easy entry into the U.S.

The only truly serious national security threats at the border are the entry of trained terrorists and the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction (particularly a hydrogen weapon) into the United States. Both are extremely low-probability events, and the odds that stricter scrutiny of travelers or shipments would prevent them are also low. Concerns about terrorism are best addressed through control of materials used to create weapons of mass destruction, the deployment of "rad-nuke" sensors near likely targets, and intelligence, not by comprehensive inspection at legal border crossing points.

These steps proposed here require no new funds. They do not require Congressional approval or authorization, and they will consume very little of the next president's time. Rather, they can be undertaken by the Department of Homeland Security, in collaboration with state, local, and Mexican authorities. All that is really needed is leadership at the sub-Cabinet level, by people who know and care about the border.

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## Re-Plan Colombia



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The financial crisis will require a reevaluation of U.S. aid. Critics of Plan Colombia argue that, in Colombia, union leaders remain at risk, human rights abusers are not brought to justice, the military commits “false positives,” and drug eradication has failed. Based on this record, they conclude that the U.S. should reduce or withhold aid from Colombia. This is unsound advice. Colombia has made great advances against the guerrillas and paramilitaries because of U.S. aid. Some 340 politicians who conspired with paramilitaries, 3,000 paramilitaries who committed crimes against humanity, and 14 perpetrators of abuses against union leaders face prosecution because of U.S. aid. These advances in security, justice and democracy would not have occurred without U.S. assistance. However, the critics are not wrong; there is much work left to be done.



The U.S. should continue to fund Plan Colombia; cutting aid would jeopardize Colombia’s ability to complete this work. However, the Plan should be amended in three critical ways. One, military aid should be withheld from army units not complying with international human rights standards. Two, the U.S. must admit that aerial spraying will lose the War on Drugs and instead prioritize policies that work: alternative development and property rights in drug-producing regions and demand-side drug prevention and treatment programs in the U.S. Three, the Colombian military has been strengthened; now it is time to bolster Colombia’s social and judicial institutions.

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## Tackle Two Big Priorities



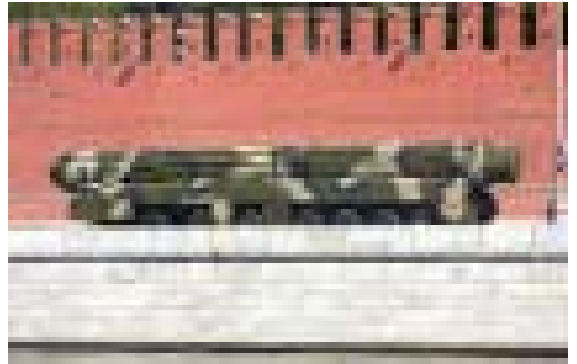
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There are two tasks that I would urge Obama and his administration to put at the top of his foreign policy agenda.

The first is both urgent and immediate: dealing with the interrelated problems of global warming and nuclear proliferation. Any program for stopping the increasing burden of atmospheric greenhouse gases must include a greatly increased role for nuclear power, the only now-available way of producing large amounts of base-load carbon-free electric power. This in turn will produce a large and wide-spread increase in the capacity to make weapons-usable fissionable material. The current institutions for containing the attendant risks—the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group are not capable of controlling the serious potential dangers the prospect presents. New institutions to prevent growth in the number of nuclear-weapons states and to guard the stocks of fissionable materials from falling into the hands of terrorists are needed. The NPT review conference in 2010 makes it urgent to address these problems immediately.

The second task is to increase the role of law and reduce the role of force in international relations, a more long-term aim. As Winston Churchill said, “law, law, law is better than war, war, war.” This aim must serve as a criterion of choice for every foreign policy decision. By its very nature, this task must be addressed multilaterally. The U.S. can lead, but to be successful, it must persuade others, particularly other great powers to join. Laws are “the wise constraints that make us free”; in order to move effectively toward the goal, we must accept these constraints as binding. No more unilateral military action, saving self-defense, narrowly and strictly defined.

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## Put a Science Adviser in the White House



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One aspect that will be common to most of the issues President Obama will have to face is the degree to which they will depend on scientific and technological evidence and judgment. The litany of such issues covers almost all that are clearly before the country: atomic weapons and proliferation, climate change, health care, nuclear power, energy, economic competitiveness, innovation, space, intelligence, and on and on. The underlying technical aspects of any of these is more than a president needs to know, but where help is usually needed is to analyze the often competing recommendations from cabinet departments and agencies and from public sources (industry, NGOs, etc.), and to present to the president the policy choices that have the country's and the president's interests clearly in mind. This is not an easy task, but can only be done by an individual close to the president, who sees him frequently, is included regularly in White House deliberations, and who has the scientific as well as political skills that are obviously not widely available. There are some who have those skills.

There was a period in the White House when this relationship existed, during the latter part of the Eisenhower administration and through Kennedy's. Then, the president's science adviser was a major player in a wide variety of policy issues, with membership on critical councils, and with open access to the president. I think it is fair to say that the quality of policy debates on issues such as arms control, weapons choices, space and the environment, among others, was enormously enhanced by that relationship. But, the relationship deteriorated shortly after Kennedy's assassination, and never survived Nixon's dismantling of the office due to his dislike of their analyses and distrust of intellectuals.

I am not saying that the existing Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), established by legislation during the Ford administration, is not useful. It is—especially with respect to science policy and openness to Congress, but it does not have the close ties to the president described above. In fact, it would be quite appropriate to have both a Special Assistant to the President for Science and

Technology while retaining OSTP for science policy analyses and recommendations. The former would be a small office and staff embedded in the White House, the latter much larger and diversified along the lines in size and focus of the Congressional Budget Office.

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## Make Jobs with Aid

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Tie foreign aid to foreign job creation without reducing U.S. employment. For every dollar we spend on aid, let's spend x% on building a small- or medium-size factory or service outlet to employ the village we are aiding. Otherwise, aid is endless. It is a blessing if a child gets an inoculation against an infectious disease, but unless her landless parents work for themselves or someone else at a living wage, the child won't survive. If she goes to school thanks to aid, she needs a job when she graduates or she will join MILLIONS of unemployed school leavers. Mathematical experimentation, the rage now to target aid to the needy, won't help one bit in raising employment.



Consulting firms provide evidence on abundant opportunities for profitable small- and medium-size businesses from Africa to Asia, but these prospects must be bigger than micro-enterprises. We have to help finance and manage these entrepreneurial opportunities—in conjunction with humanitarian aid—otherwise aid recipients and American taxpayers will suffer from political unrest or starvation in the long run.

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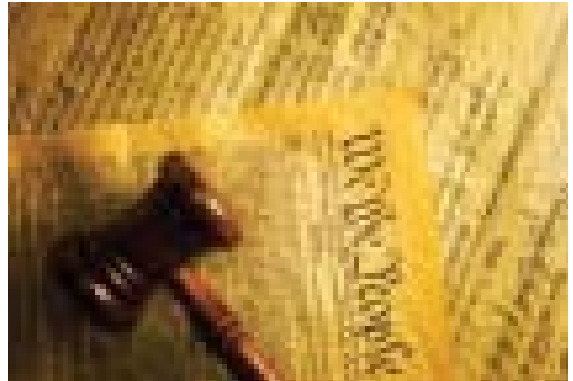


## Protect and Broaden Human Rights



by **Balakrishnan Rajagopal**  
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Barack Obama needs to pursue two courses of action on human rights. First, he needs to change course visibly on the way the U.S. has approached the “war on terror.” The concrete measures he can take here include closing down Guantanamo and other undisclosed sites, and transferring all detainees to the ordinary criminal justice system and the regular military justice system. He can reverse past executive orders on detention, rendition, and torture, and issue a new executive order ensuring that no one will be kidnapped or captured from other countries by U.S. personnel, that interrogations will adhere to the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and that no one will be transferred to any country that practices torture. President Obama also needs to create a special mechanism that will hold individuals accountable for the abuses committed in the last eight years, and also ensure that future actions against terrorism remain accountable.



Second, President Obama needs to end America’s opposition to the freedom from want, which was one of the original four freedoms that President Franklin Roosevelt spoke about. Since the Reagan administration, the U.S. has aggressively opposed any recognition of economic and social rights as human rights, rights such as housing and education. It has failed to sign and ratify the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, one of the earliest and most widely ratified treaties in the world. It has consistently opposed the recognition of development as a human right. This is the moment to end that opposition when so many Americans are themselves experiencing poverty and want, losing their jobs and housing. Ratifying the International Covenant affirms America’s core values, expresses solidarity with the poor and working class in the U.S. and abroad, and ends an American exceptionalism which has often been seen as the arrogance of the rich.

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## Change How We Trade with Postwar Countries



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The United States under the Obama administration should rework its foreign policy regarding the poorest countries caught in the so-called conflict trap, by adopting trade policies to help them avoid conflict relapse.

Countries that descend into civil war or other forms of internecine violence pose grave problems at three levels: first, to their own peoples, economies, and institutions; second, to those of neighboring countries that they destabilize; and third, to the larger international community, members of which may be targeted for economic or ideological reasons. The rise of Somali piracy is just one recent example of a negative global externality arising from an unrecovered civil war.

In economically driven wars, predatory activity (most often of rural origin) targets concentrations of trade and value-added/production (most often of urban origin). Firms adapt to longstanding predation by dispersing their supply chains strategically. This adaptation benefits the local economy in a few ways, most notably by substituting domestic rural raw materials for imported inputs, thereby building the rudiments of mutually beneficial rural-urban trade and lessening the chances of future internecine conflict.

Given the dispersal adaptations of economies in conflict, suddenly introducing concentrations of trade and value-added will likely incite more predation. Furthermore, given the importance of domestic rural-urban trade in sustaining peace, the rapid influx of foreign products threatens to undo the few positive outcomes of civil war. Yet the two most-championed postwar economic policies encourage raw materials export (to jumpstart the economy rapidly) and trade liberalization (to bring in needed goods and services). While not unreasonable in moderation, in excess these policies threaten to bring about a conflict relapse by creating value concentrations unlinked to the rest of the economy and undermining domestic trade.

The Obama administration should recognize that postwar countries have special need for protectionist trade policies.

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## Approaching Bioterrorism Anew



By Jeanne Guillemin  
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In reaction to the 2001 anthrax letter attacks, which came just weeks after 9/11, both the Bush White House and Congress authorized the mobilization of the biomedical sciences for defenses against bioterrorism, the new, high-priority national security threat. Over \$60 billion has gone into building high-containment laboratories and funding research for medical protection against exotic infectious diseases such as anthrax, smallpox, the Ebola virus and several dozen others. Unfortunately, the bioterrorism threat is all too susceptible to political manipulation: first it was Al Qaeda that was plotting germ attacks on Americans, then in 2002 it was Iraq, and later North Korean or maybe Iran. After six years of unregulated spending and shaky intelligence, the nation needs a leaner, meaner, and updated biodefense policy.

To begin, the focus on the individual select agent (nearly a thousand scientists are now studying the anthrax bacterium) is outmoded and generates unnecessary risks when it leads to mini-stockpiles of more virulent pathogens. As we know now, the spores in the 2001 anthrax letters came from just such a reservoir at Fort Detrick. Biodefense funding should favor basic science and potentially broad medical applicability, involving, for example, the study of the immune system or inflammation. Such a reorientation would decrease the need for high-containment laboratories (Biosafety levels 3 and 4) where security breaches, including escaped plague-infected mice, mislabeled vials, pathogen spills, unsecured windows, and power failures, have recently terrorized local—mostly minority or rural—communities. Protocols for pathogenic aerosol tests on lab animals, the most high-risk research, should be banned in laboratories in or near populated areas.

Even a trimmed-down, focused, and tougher biodefense policy remains flawed. As currently conceived, it rests on two fallacies. One is that technological fixes (mainly commercially produced pharmaceuticals) can by themselves stave off the impact of a catastrophic bioterrorist attack. In reality, protection against an unpredicted infectious disease outbreak relies on local medical response

and accurate, quick communication with the vulnerable public, a health care necessity our nation can no longer afford to ignore.

The other fallacy is that restraints against biological weapons and bioterrorism can be accomplished without vigorous international cooperation—which is essential to effective laws and credible intelligence. In July 2001 in Geneva, the U.S. bulldozed ongoing negotiations for a reinforced Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) that would have put the treaty on an organizational par with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Instead, the last seven years has produced a patchwork of limited accords and regulations that, as new biotechnologies appear, have left multiple loopholes for secret violations of the BWC and failed to provide global incentives to deter state or non-state terrorism.

President Obama should seize the historic opportunity to reenergize the BWC protocol talks with the goal of creating a comprehensive legal and organizational framework to prevent biological weapons proliferation and use. More than 170 states are party to the treaty. They await this important new leadership.

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## Engage Intelligently

by Peter J. P. Krause  
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The Bush administration's announcement that a "war of ideas" was a central front in America's struggle with Al Qaeda demonstrated recognition that success cannot be achieved solely through strength of arms. Unfortunately, failures in the Bush team's conception and execution require that President Obama launch an immediate, fundamental overhaul of U.S. efforts to engage the world's citizens, particularly those in the Middle East.

The Bush team labeled this ideological struggle a "war" and fought it as such, pushing American news outlets that blasted pro-U.S. news and planting fake stories in foreign papers. Obama must recast U.S. efforts as a "dialogue of ideas" rather than a "war." The latter is perceived as a war against Islam or Muslims with a winner and a loser, rather than a broader engagement that seeks mutual understanding and progress.

Labels alone are not enough, however. This shift in words must be accompanied by a corresponding shift in action. Funding for the Fulbright Program should be doubled or tripled immediately; the price of bringing 6,000 of the world's brightest students to America's shores each year is equal to what the U.S. military spends in one day in Iraq. U.S. media outlets like Al-Hurra should be reconfigured to engage viewers using a C-Span-type model. Engagement by government officials and private citizens alike should be explicitly encouraged through substantive funding increases for programs in key foreign languages like Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu. These changes should be accompanied by policies that address some of America's greatest failures in the dialogue of ideas: closing Guantanamo and real reengagement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Finally, President Obama must realize that the U.S. government is often not the most effective actor to lead a dialogue of ideas, particularly concerning debates over Islam. Intelligent engagement is as much about listening, learning, and picking the right battles as it is about resources, and an increase in the latter must not obscure the importance of the former in America's efforts.

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## Frustrate Terrorism

by John Tirman  
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Discussions about terrorism invariably raise the temperature in the room, and for good reason—fear, anger, remorse, and frustration all are stirred by memories of 9/11, the London Tube bombings, Bali, Madrid, Mumbai, and so on. We have learned much about the motives, social organization, ideology, and aspirations associated with political violence, however, and can deal with the threat effectively.

What we know is that with few exceptions acts of terror are not the result of religious devotion or ideology; are not coordinated by a central global command, like Al Qaeda; are not the consequence of insanity or a coherent philosophy of conquest. Interviews with and writings of known terrorists confirm their religious understanding or commitment is thin. Actors tend to be local, a group of disaffected youth, like a gang, possibly connected to an organization but not likely the result of recruitment. The goals are rarely more than an expression of outrage against harm they perceive against their people, or what they consider to be a defensive act. The carnage in Iraq is a proximate cause of much violence we have witnessed in Europe, and the tiny number of incompetent plots in the U.S.

Disrupting the slowly forming networks of the disaffected youths then appears to be the best way to prevent violence. This, indeed, is what law enforcement and intelligence services have achieved with a remarkably high rate of success. Large-scale military operations—i.e., wars—tend to have the opposite effect, being a stimulus for terror rather than a dampener.

Improved community relations, economic opportunities, cultural awareness, and other “soft” techniques also have their part, particularly where social alienation is a clear spark to potential violence. In the global south, these approaches are exceptionally challenging in scale, but are consistent with sustainable development in any case.

Surely one lesson to learn is not to overstate the threat—including repeated and dire alarms about nuclear or biological weapons—and keep the actual scale of likely harm in perspective. Eliminating rhetoric about the “war on terrorism” is also worthwhile. To make these pests more than they are is to hand them a victory they don’t deserve.

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## Take Four Steps for Ties to Asia



by M. Taylor Fravel  
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The election of Barack Obama presents an opportunity to rebuild and reestablish the legitimacy of American power around the world. Nowhere, perhaps, are expectations greater than in East Asia, a region where the U.S. plays a major and perhaps decisive role in maintaining stability and fostering economic prosperity. Although President Bush improved bilateral security relations with a few key powers in the region, including China, Japan, and India, concerns about the level of U.S. interest in and commitment to the region persist.

To enhance U.S. legitimacy in East Asia, President Obama should take the following four steps: First, the United States announce its intention to sign the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and join the East Asian Summit, a new multilateral organization that currently includes most states in Northeast and Southeast Asia. The U.S. can do more in and for the region if it participates in its core institutions. Second, the president should upgrade its ambassador to ASEAN, which remains a low-level State Department position based in Washington, not Jakarta. This individual can speak on behalf of the president and thus demonstrate the importance that the U.S. attaches to its relations with Southeast Asia. Third, the president should attend the next meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a regional group dedicated to managing regional security issues. Condoleezza Rice repeatedly skipped this event, much to the chagrin of Asian leaders. By participating, President Obama would signal his own personal willingness to engage the region on the issues that matter most to the U.S., its allies and states in East Asia. Fourth, the president should convene a U.S.-ASEAN summit, a meeting that Bush set-up and then cancelled before its initial convocation. Such a meeting would help consolidate working-level relationships between the U.S. and ASEAN governments.

Taken together, these four steps would have a simple message to all of East Asia: America is back.

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## Use Women to Build Peace

by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini  
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For decades, the U.S. and its key allies have emphasized the importance of women's empowerment for sustainable development and peace. Much of the talk has been politically correct lip service, rarely backed by the will or the budget needed to make systemic change.

This has not deterred women's rights advocates from pushing forward and making some gains internationally. Women's grassroots activism is thriving. The scope of issues they tackle has expanded beyond traditional development or humanitarianism to hard security and governance. But the activism is in part spurred by increases in insecurity and violence in their communities.

If the U.S. is serious about promoting sustainable peace, security, and development, it should take women seriously. Why? Because women's perspectives are from the ground up, seeing problems long before they escalate—e.g., the rise of honor killings in Pakistan in recent years was a harbinger of the forms of political extremism and violence we witness today. Women by and large are not fomenting extremism or violence; they are at the frontlines of fighting them. Even in Anbar province in Iraq, women demanded an end to violence and rejection of Al Qaeda infiltration of their families. Empowering women is a pragmatic and efficient means of generating locally owned and sustainable solutions.

But this needs leadership. If the political will exists, the new administration is pushing on an open door. It can lead by example in a number of ways.

**1. Shift toward demand-driven development aid.** This provides a deeper understanding of events and needs from the standpoint of the recipients and beneficiaries, not the state or external institutions. It's likely to result in programming that addresses real needs and generates greater buy-in and success.

**2. Women's leadership is strongest in civil society and the grassroots.** In pursuing development and peace policies, the U.S. should support and promote more inclusive structures that reach out and engage women where they are.

**3. Make a commitment to women and men's development and inclusion systematically across budgets and programming priorities,** to data collection, analyses, hiring policies and staff appraisals within U.S. agencies, among recipients of U.S. aid (including multilateral organizations) and subcontractors. Women's protection and participation should no longer be an added paragraph or a ticked box. It should be demonstrably integrated and assessed.

**4. Host a high-level summit of UN agency heads, key NGO partners in the humanitarian community, and other donors to focus attention on sexual violence in crises.** We need strategies and specific measure that demonstrate a commitment to preventing and limiting such violence, rather than accepting it as an inevitable byproduct of crisis.

For too long we have been guided by and invested in the predominantly male leadership of the countries we seek to aid. It is time to bring in the rest of the population—particularly the 50 percent or more that is female, and see what real change can mean.

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# Slow but Steady on Kashmir

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The dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is profoundly destabilizing. The U.S. has a strong interest in bolstering a stable Pakistan and encouraging India's rise, and thus it should care about Kashmir. India, however, is vehemently opposed to internationalization of the issue, while Pakistani leaders are too weak and internally divided to make major concessions.

Instead of special envoys and summits, the U.S. should adopt a "quiet diplomacy" approach that offers incentives to India and Pakistan for making tangible, if small, progress on the ground in Kashmir. The U.S. should offer to help fund sustained local policy initiatives in both Indian and Pakistani-administered Kashmir aimed at improving governance and encouraging economic exchange and the movement of people across the Line of Control. An initiative focused on local government and civil society lacks the drama of shuttle diplomacy and grand bargains, but can actually improve the daily lives of Kashmiris while giving them more say over their own governance. This slow, incremental strategy falls far short of the ambitions of many Kashmiris, Indians, and Pakistanis, but it can provide a base of trust and confidence to eventually move toward a more encompassing settlement.



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