



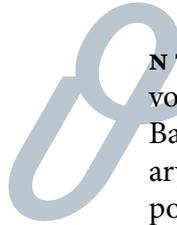
Foreign Policy

ELECTION GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

By Julia Knight



ON THE EVE of the election, the state of the economy is the top priority for voters, and it is also the lens through which many Americans will view Barack Obama and Mitt Romney's foreign policy positions. As of January, 81% of Americans believe that the president should focus on domestic policy and 9% believe that he should focus on foreign policy. Just four years ago, 56% of Americans wanted a domestic policy focus while 31% prioritized foreign policy.

However, preoccupation with economic concerns does not signal American indifference to foreign policy in this election season. "Protecting the jobs of American workers is the only foreign policy goal seen to have increased in importance since 2008, with 83% now saying is 'very important,'" a recent poll from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs reports. Whether they have expanded their businesses by selling to new markets or whether they have lost their jobs to outsourcing, Americans are well aware that domestic job creation and economic prosperity are inextricably tied to global events. Americans are also concerned about U.S. prestige on the world stage, as the recent proliferation of books and op-eds about American competitiveness and decline suggests. What Americans' economic concerns *do* mean, especially when coupled with recent experience of the human and fiscal costs of war, is that there are relatively low levels of interest in costly, personnel-heavy military interventions overseas. At the same time, many Americans continue to believe in the country's role as a beacon of democracy and human rights, with American citizens and NGOs regularly calling for action against various forms of global injustice.

Obama's Foreign Policy



Over the past four years, Barack Obama's foreign policy challenges have ranged from dealing with an increasingly assertive China to completely new regimes in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia to political debate around the surge in Afghanistan. On the whole, Obama's efforts show him to be tough on national defense issues and responsive to American public opinion. President Obama ordered the raid in Pakistan that killed Osama Bin Laden, ended the increasingly unpopular Iraq War in December 2011, and decided that most U.S. troops would leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014. While the future prospects of Iraq and especially Afghanistan are deeply uncertain, there is little domestic will for continued engagement. During his campaign in 2008, Obama emphasized his enthusiasm for multilateralism, and U.S. participation in the NATO-organized endeavor in Libya in 2011 was brief, and arguably, highly effective.

Obama has achieved mixed results on other key foreign policy issues.

Obama came into the White House with the promise of improving the U.S.' relationship with the Muslim world, a goal that seemed not too distant when he gave his historic speech at Cairo University in June 2009. According to sources like the Pew Global Attitudes Project, world opinion of the U.S. has improved in most countries since 2008—sometimes substantially—but progress in many Muslim countries ranges from minimal to negative. Other foreign policy challenges continue to seem as intractable. Although Obama has amassed extensive international cooperation for sanctions on Iran, and although the U.S.- and Israel-led Stuxnet computer worm operation probably delayed Iran's nuclear ambitions, Iran remains deeply determined to pursue its nuclear program. The U.S. relationship with Pakistan is as fraught as ever. Progress on the peace process in Israel and Palestine is minimal.

Obama's covert overseas operations are a double-edged sword, responsible for much of his domestic popularity on foreign policy issues but also raising legal and normative questions around the world and at home. During his presidency, Obama bolstered George W. Bush's cyberwarfare program and ramped up drone attacks, including ordering the targeted attack that killed alleged Al-Qaeda affiliate and American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki. According to surveys like the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the drone program is deeply unpopular throughout most of the world, but Americans largely support it. Moreover, Democrats who oppose these programs are unlikely to pursue this opposition too far during an election year. Nevertheless, we should expect the legal and normative debate about drone attacks and other covert operations to continue for years to come.

Romney's foreign policy proposals

Across the aisle, Mitt Romney faces an uphill battle in establishing himself as a strong foreign policy alternative, especially given that Republicans overwhelmingly approve of policies like the drone program. Romney has little foreign policy experience and his advisers will play an especially important role in shaping his vision. The majority of his 40 or so main foreign policy advisers—around 70%—come from the George W. Bush administration. The foreign policy team embodies both neoconservative and more moderate policy views, and these differing stances have reportedly provoked both tension and/or productive discussion.

National defense, Iran and Israel are three policy areas where Romney seeks to differentiate himself from Obama. Romney has criticized Obama as weak on national defense, pledging to roll back the Obama administration's cuts to the defense budget and to bolster U.S. military capacity through projects like increasing the number of navy ships built each year. Romney's belief that the U.S. should help to provide arms to Syria's rebels is a middle-of-the-road belief in the Republican Party; some officials, like John McCain, are pushing for air strikes. Romney vocally opposed Obama's decision to end the war in Iraq (unlike 78% of Americans who, by Decem-



ber 2011, supported the withdrawal) and Romney's views on Afghanistan have been pilloried for being unclear.

Romney believes that Obama's response to Iran has been weak and ineffective. He has grounded much of his rhetoric about Iran in discussions of U.S. military power, also lambasting Obama's lack of support for Iran's Green Revolution in 2009. As Romney argued on the campaign trail, "if Barack Obama is re-elected, Iran will have a nuclear weapon." Additionally, Romney is particularly critical of Obama's policies toward Israel. His campaign website contends that "instead of fostering stability and security, [the Obama administration has] diminished U.S. authority and painted both Israel and ourselves into a corner." In another instance, after Obama made remarks that included a call for a two-state solution based on 1967 borders, Romney declared, "President Obama has thrown Israel under a bus. He has disrespected Israel and undermined its ability to negotiate peace." Romney vows to strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

More likely than not, much of Romney's campaign successes in the foreign policy arena will boil down to what foreign policy issues he can link to domestic economic concerns. For example, Romney's statement about his intention to take on alleged Chinese currency manipulation on his first day of office may well resonate with voters frustrated by the economy. Romney's plans to make military spending a minimum 4% of GDP will garner support among companies and regions of the U.S. concerned about the economic implications of defense cuts. The Obama camp is also emphasizing the link between foreign policy and the economy—for instance, by pledging to eliminate tax incentives for companies that outsource.

Subtle Differences

In an election where the candidates' foreign policy stances are not extremely different, their big-picture views of foreign policy may also disproportionately influence voters. Mitt Romney has called for "an American Century" in foreign policy, asserting, "I will not surrender America's role in the world" and "I will never, ever apologize for America." As protests and violence linked to a film deeply offensive to Islam spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Romney suggested that a deficit of American global leadership fueled the turmoil. Barack Obama, on the other hand, has portrayed Romney and his running mate Paul Ryan's foreign policy views as containing dangerous echoes of the George W. Bush years. "My opponent and his running mate are new to foreign policy, but from all that we've seen and heard, they want to take us back to an era of blustering and blundering that cost America so dearly... [A]fter two wars that have cost us thousands of lives and over a trillion dollars, it's time to do some nation-building right here at home," Obama argued at the Democratic National Convention.

Presidential candidates' foreign policy promises often fail to come to fruition after election season is over. Domestic enthusiasm for overseas involvement waxes and wanes; first-time presidents gain access to restricted intel-

ligence information; and above all, political and technological realities are upended, creating a need for new policy responses. During the 2008 election season, Hosni Mubarak was president of Egypt, the implications of domestic energy were less clear, and President Obama was not [aware](#) of the U.S. technical capacity for cyber war against Iran. We do not know what the world will look like in 2016, so we turn to candidates' competing visions, their views on current issues, and our knowledge of foreign policy challenges.

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THE ECONOMY

by Nasos Mihalakas

- ✓ *What will it take to get the U.S. economy back on track and keep America competitive?*
- ✓ *What should be the role of government in growing the economy and creating jobs?*
- ✓ *How should the U.S. deal with the domestic and global consequences of its 'fiscal cliff'?*

DESPITE the recent attention foreign policy challenges in the Middle East have received on the campaign trail, U.S. economic recovery remains the dominant issue for Americans going to the polls in November. Yet U.S. growth remains heavily reliant on the global economy—still being shaken by Europe's debt crisis, China's rise and the rapid growth of emerging markets.

Austerity vs. Growth—As Goes the U.S., So Goes the World

Most developed countries of the northern hemisphere are still struggling to recover from the global recession that hit the world almost four years ago. Back in 2009, governments in Europe and the U.S., and even China, implemented massive stimulus programs in an attempt to grow their economies and fight the global recession. As the sovereign debt crisis in Europe intensified, and the U.S. stimulus failed to fully end the recession (it only stabilized the economy—unemployment is still over 8%), austerity has now become the new popular medicine.

What are the policies offered by the two presidential candidates to grow the U.S. economy, and thus dampen the global recession? What is the role of government in promoting economic growth and job creation?

Mitt Romney has said the role of government should be reduced greatly, and should act as “the partner, not the enemy, of private enterprise.” President Obama contends that when the private sector is not “creating jobs” then it’s up to the government to “kick-start the economy.” Mr. Romney argues that the President simply does not understand how private enterprise works. Mr. Obama counters that Mr. Romney’s experience in the private sector is in outsourcing/downsizing jobs, and not creating them.

Barack Obama’s Economic Policies



President Obama’s preferred strategy for growing the economy is another stimulus, by any other name. He knows he will not get another stimulus from the Republican House, so he is advocating growing the economy by increasing domestic production (especially in the hi-tech sector), manufacturing and exports. To achieve these goals, he has supported tax incentives for investment in clean energy technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels, and advanced car batteries, and approved the bailout of the auto industry. He continues to advocate additional government intervention in the economy, especially in manufacturing.

One issue of great global importance that has emerged as a possible difference between the two candidates is the outflow of American jobs to other countries. Indeed, according to a recent survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 83% of Americans said protecting the jobs of American workers is “very important.” President Obama has been a strong advocate for rewriting the rules that allow U.S. corporations not to pay taxes on income generated overseas. On the other hand, the President has argued that in his private capacity (as CEO of Bain Capital) Mr. Romney invested in companies that specialized in helping other firms move operations overseas. Outsourcing of U.S. jobs has been happening for the better part of the last 30 years, but the current unemployment level in the U.S. economy has brought the issue to a sharper focus.

President Obama also recognizes the importance of reducing government debt, which is why he is promoting the reduction of government spending, in conjunction with some “revenue enhancements.” Although President Obama wants to abolish the Bush-era tax cuts due to expire at the end of this year, he is now calling for a one-year extension of tax cuts for those making under \$200K (\$250K for families).

Mitt Romney’s Economic Policies



Mitt Romney believes that only the private sector can grow the economy and create jobs. Therefore, Mr. Romney’s strategy involves lowering taxes—especially for “job creators”—rolling back government regulations and making domestic drilling and oil production easier and cheaper. Mr. Romney’s choice of Paul Ryan, the architect of the House Republican 2013

Budget Resolution, as his vice-presidential candidate further demonstrates his commitment to free-market principles, a smaller government, and the need for reduction in social spending, particularly Medicare.

In particular, Mr. Romney wants to reduce federal spending and reform the nation's tax code to focus on job creation and growth. However, his solution to repairing the tax code is to reduce the marginal tax rates and thus stimulate entrepreneurship, job creation and investment. Consistent with past Republican presidential candidates, Mr. Romney believes that lowering taxes will ultimately generate more revenue enough to fund a smaller, smarter, simpler government.

A big part of Mr. Romney's strategy for creating jobs and jumpstarting economic recovery involves reducing the uncertainty in the market—uncertainty about the cost of doing business due to financial and healthcare regulations introduced by the Obama administration. In particular, Mr. Romney intends to reverse most of President Obama's regulatory policies, including the health care reform package commonly known as "Obama-care" (or Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) and the Dodd-Frank financial regulatory act.

Finally, a major component of Mr. Romney's strategy is making low-cost energy available by immediately building the Keystone pipeline and opening government lands for drilling. Energy independence from foreign suppliers is of course a major component of President Obama's economic strategy as well, only his focus is more on renewable energy. However, with oil prices at relatively low levels due to the global recession and the lack of demand, this issue seems less relevant in the upcoming election.

The Fiscal Cliff

Last summer, as part of the agreement to raise the federal debt ceiling, Democrats and Republicans in Congress agreed to cut—over ten years—more than \$900 billion in spending from government programs and federal agencies. Cuts were to come from both security-related and non-security-related programs. Spending cuts were to be identified by a special House and Senate committee last fall. Because the committee failed to reach an agreement, automatic, across-the-board spending cuts are scheduled to come into effect at the beginning of next year. Cuts will be divided equally between defense spending and domestic expenses.

In addition, a number of tax breaks currently on the books are due to expire by the end of 2012. They include the Bush-era tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 (extended by President Obama in 2009), and the tax cuts enacted in 2009 and 2010 by President Obama. According to the Congressional Budget Office, if allowed to take effect, these expirations and other current laws will reduce the 2013 deficit by almost \$500 billion: from roughly 7.3% of the nation's GDP to about 4% of GDP the largest one year reduction since 1969. It will also see taxes go up for about 80% of all Americans, with an average rise of about \$3,700, according to the Tax Policy Center. This has come to be known as the "fiscal cliff."

To avoid it, President Obama wants to use a combination of tax increases for the wealthy and some spending cuts in government programs in order to reduce the deficit more gradually over time. Mitt Romney has asked for a one-year extension of all tax cuts and the postponement of spending cuts into next year, so he can have the time to develop his own deficit-reduction plan.

Cutting government spending while raising taxes would certainly reduce national debt. However, doing this during a recession would likely have significant negative effects on the growth of the economy, hurting financially many middle-class Americans. Cutting government spending and raising taxes has been the preferred medicine prescribed by the EU and the IMF to the ailing economies of Europe (Ireland, Portugal, and Greece), leading in most cases to a prolonged recession. However, recession in a small European country will not have the same impact on the global economy as will a recession in the U.S.

Unfortunately, neither candidate is willing to tackle this major issue head-on, preferring to deal with it after the election.

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IRAN

By Allison M. Kushner

- ✓ *A nuclear Iran, what's the big deal?*
- ✓ *Would Iran attack Israel with nuclear weapons?*
- ✓ *What would cause the U.S. to intervene militarily?*



WHILE the U.S. continues to recover from protracted and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the potential for a military conflict with Iran over its nuclear program is an important issue for America's presidential candidates and voters. Ironically, nuclear power, the issue currently dividing the two countries, was once a joint endeavor. Iran's nuclear program was launched in the 1950s with U.S. assistance as part of the Atoms for Peace Program.

The longstanding Iranian nuclear issue spans, albeit with varying levels of urgency, presidential administrations dating to the fall of the Shah's

government in 1979 and the subsequent creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At present, American politics is overwhelmingly driven by the notion that an Iran with nuclear weapons would be detrimental to regional and global stability, especially if it led to a confrontation between Israel and Iran, and would have the potential to drag America into a war that it cannot afford.

With Iran's known support of terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Hamas, there is a fear that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could lead to the country providing nuclear weapons to terrorist organizations. Although it is arguable that Iran would not hasten to share its hard-earned nuclear capability, it is a possibility for which the international community would have to prepare.

President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, his opponent for the 2012 presidential election, have three primary tools in their political arsenals for containing Iran's nuclear ambitions: diplomacy, sanctions and military action. The candidates' respective policies differ in the order in which the options are pursued, if at all, and the importance placed on each.

With Obama and Romney's campaigns for the 2012 presidential election underway, the candidates are faced with the challenge of proposing policies that will contain Iran's nuclear ambitions in an effort to stabilize the Middle East, safeguard America's regional interests and ensure America's security.

Barack Obama's Policy



During his 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama pledged to open dialogue with Iran. Shortly after assuming office in 2009, Obama delivered a video message to Iranians on the occasion of the Iranian New Year aimed at opening the lines of communication between Washington and Tehran

My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us, and to pursuing constructive ties among the U.S., Iran and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect.

Obama's attempt to revive diplomatic relations with Iran's government was unsuccessful, as Obama's rhetoric and proposed relations were not reciprocated by the Iranian regime. Although it is arguable that Obama's efforts were insufficient, it is undeniable that they were well-intentioned. Critics called them naive.

Three months after the president's message, Iran's disputed June 2009 presidential election gave rise to the Green Movement. Comprised of average people demanding change and contesting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection, uprisings throughout Iran became known as the Green Movement. As the Green Movement gained momentum through-

out the world, the American government had the opportunity to support Iranians in their quest for rights and regime change. While abstractly supporting democratic movements worldwide, Obama provided no direct assistance to Iranians. Favoring non-intervention, Obama argued that direct involvement would be counterproductive given the countries' tumultuous relationship and history of unwanted American meddling in Iran's affairs.

Although Obama did not provide assistance to Iran's Green Movement, continued government violence against Iranians catalyzed the Obama administration to harden its stance against Iran and actively pursue measures, in the form of sanctions, to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear.

In addition to voting for United Nations Security Council resolutions sanctioning Iran, the Obama Administration has also acted unilaterally in an attempt to punish Iran for pursuing a nuclear program. A 2011 series of sanctions targeting Iran's petroleum and financial sectors aimed to strangle Iran's economy to the point where its government would be forced to the negotiation table. Although a series of international negotiations began in March 2012, neither these direct talks nor increased international and unilateral sanctions have succeeded in halting Iran's nuclear program, though it has been reported that Iran's oil exports dropped from 1.7 million barrels in June to just 1 million in July of 2012, according to *The Washington Post*.

Despite diplomatic endeavors and the use of sanctions to curtail Iran's nuclear program, Obama has not eliminated the possibility of military action. He recently increased American military presence in the Persian Gulf both to deter Iran from blocking the Strait of Hormuz and to strengthen America's deep-strike capability. Although seemingly a last resort, a military strike, which has the potential to start another drawn-out Middle East war, is not completely off the president's radar.

Mitt Romney's Proposed Policy

Mitt Romney places military action and the safeguarding of U.S. ally Israel at the forefront of his Iran policy. He rationalizes that only when Iran knows that the U.S. is serious about ending Iran's nuclear program, and will do so by any means necessary, will the country peacefully relinquish its nuclear ambitions. A February 2012 statement by the presidential candidate illustrates how rhetoric alone is insufficient to halt Iran's nuclear program. He said, "They're [military options] not just on the table. They are in our hand."

In a March 5th opinion piece for *The Washington Post*, Romney outlined his "peace through strength" policy. The policy prescription would focus on building America's military, including, but not limited to, increasing the country's national defense budget, annual naval shipbuilding, and increasing active-duty military personnel by approximately 100,000. In addition to maintaining aircraft carrier task forces in the Eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf region, Romney proposes enhancing intelligence sharing and military coordination with Israel and Arab allies. Coordinated naval



exercises in the Middle East will signal America's military strength to Iran's leadership. Such demonstrations would make it clear that a nuclear Iran is not only unacceptable to the U.S. but that the U.S. has the ability to forcibly eliminate Iran's nuclear program.

Whereas President Obama has relied heavily on international and unilateral sanctions to deter Iran's nuclear program, Romney argues that sanctions alone will not force Iran to end its nuclear ambitions. With four rounds of sanctions concluded (three under President George W. Bush, and one under President Obama), Romney's policy stipulates that a fifth round of sanctions are necessary, but will not be the primary means of eliminating Iran's nuclear program. In a fifth round of negotiations, Romney proposes harsher sanctions targeting financial resources that fund the Iranian regime and its Revolutionary Guard Corps. Additionally, Romney advocates sanctions on all of the Revolutionary Guard's business activities. This includes sanctions against firms that transport petroleum products to and from Iran.

Although adamant that military buildup and actions combined with harsher sanctions is the best means of pressuring Iran to forego its nuclear program, Romney has a plan to ensure that if Iran becomes nuclear America and its allies will be protected. A fully operational missile defense system and missile interceptors would be installed in Eastern Europe should Iran's nuclear progress continue. These systems will serve as a protective umbrella against nuclear weapons.

Relying heavily on military strength and coordination with regional allies to project its abilities, Romney's proposed Iran policy is influenced by the inability of previous administrations and the international community to diplomatically resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. With harsher sanctions complementing his initiative to attain "peace through strength" it is likely that negotiations will be at the back of Romney's Iran policy.

The Red Line

At the heart of the two candidate's positions on Iran is the "red line" often referred to by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the point at which Iran must be confronted.

The Obama administration continues to insist that it is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring an actual nuclear weapon, which some in the Obama camp say is not imminent.

For Romney, the red line lies at perhaps a much closer date, that is, when Iran obtains a nuclear "capability," which entails, according to *The New York Times*'s David Sanger, a combination of nuclear fuel and the ability to mount it on a weapon. This puts Romney in closer alignment with Netanyahu's assessment and at odds with the Obama administration.

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TERRORISM AND DEFENSE

By Gail Harris

- ✓ What is the best way to deal with the continuing terrorist threat?
- ✓ How much of a presence should the U.S. maintain in Iraq and Afghanistan?
- ✓ How much should the U.S. spend on defense?

AS THE U.S. approaches the upcoming Presidential elections more than a decade after the al-Qaeda attacks of 9/11, Americans still rank terrorism as a top issue and support continued involvement on the international stage. Indeed, a June 2012 poll by the Pew Research Center showed that while 83% of the public felt “we should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home,” 83% also felt “it’s best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs.” How do the candidates differ in their approaches to combating terrorism, to drawing down forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and to defense policy in general?

In *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* published in January 2012, the Obama administration laid out its approach:



The demise of Osama bin Laden and the capturing or killing of many other senior al-Qaeda leaders has rendered the group far less capable. However, al-Qaeda and its affiliates remain active in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere.... For the foreseeable future, the U.S. will continue to take an active approach to countering these threats by monitoring the activities of non-state threats worldwide, working with allies and partners to establish control over ungoverned territories, and directly striking the most dangerous groups and individuals when necessary.



The Romney campaign published its view of the Obama strategy in *An American Century: A Strategy to Secure America’s Enduring Interests and Ideals A Romney for President White Paper*. Governor Romney feels the agencies assigned to fight terrorism have not been given enough authority.

...[W]e must also make sure that those agencies charged with combating terrorism have the clearest mandate to keep America safe. As president, Mitt Romney will empower all relevant military, intelligence, and homeland security agencies with the appropriate legal authority and policy guidance to dismantle terrorist groups and prevent terrorist attacks on our homeland and on targets abroad.”



Iraq

The Obama administration sees the war in Iraq as ended “responsibly” but acknowledges there are problems. In March, General James N. Mattis, the Commander of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), testified before Congress:

Iraq, too, will be challenged to hold al-Qaeda at bay... With the withdrawal of our last troop units from Iraq...and as we continue to draw down in Afghanistan...our ground-based troop presence across the region is decreasing... how do we maintain our presence with a light footprint?... USCENTCOM area of responsibility will assume an increasingly maritime character with special operations forces (SOF) and strong air enablers. Naval forces—with embarked troops—provide presence and a cost efficient means of rapidly projecting power in a crisis to execute contingency operations.

In October 2011, Governor Romney issued a press statement on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq:

President Obama’s astonishing failure to secure an orderly transition in Iraq has unnecessarily put at risk the victories that were won through the blood and sacrifice of thousands of American men and women. The unavoidable question is whether this decision is the result of a naked political calculation or simply sheer ineptitude in negotiations with the Iraqi government. The American people deserve to hear the recommendations that were made by our military commanders in Iraq.



Governor Romney believes budget cuts have left the military a “hollow force” with a military inventory largely composed of weapons 40 to 50 years old. The Navy consists of 284 ships, the lowest level since the beginning of World War I.

Our naval planners indicate we need 328 ships to fulfill the Navy’s role of global presence and power projection in defense of American security. Our Air Force, which had 82 fighter squadrons at the end of the Cold War, has been reduced to 39 today.

The Governor proposes increasing the military budget to 4% of the GDP. Romney believes he can fund this increase through better management practices. In his white paper he gives the following example:

During World War II the U.S. built 1,000 ships per year with 1,000 people employed in the Bureau of Ships, as the purchasing department of the Department of the Navy was then called... Today, when we are building only nine ships a year, the Pentagon manages the shipbuilding process with some 25,000 people.



Afghanistan

President Obama believes progress in the war in Afghanistan has allowed the U.S. and its allies to begin the transition to Afghan responsibility by 2014. He has taken steps to show the U.S. is not abandoning Afghanistan and, in order to prevent a resurgence of the Taliban, signed a partnership agreement with Afghan leader Hamid Karzai that laid out the framework for U.S. involvement post 2014. The U.S. agreed to “seek” funds to support the continued equipping and training of the Afghan security forces. The Afghans agreed to give U.S. military forces access for the training of Afghan forces and combating al-Qaeda and other agreed upon missions.

Governor Romney has been critical of the administration’s handling of the war stating “It would be a tragedy for Afghanistan and a strategic setback for America if the Taliban returned to power and once again created a sanctuary for terrorists. We tolerated such a sanctuary until we lost thousands on September 11, 2001.” He has two main points:

President Obama’s announcement of the surge and at the same time a withdrawal date of the surge forces by September 2012 sent mixed signals and encouraged the Taliban to have a wait-us-out strategy. The President did not listen to the counsel of his on-scene military commanders.

President Obama has made it a point to avoid discussing the details of current operations. An insight into his administration’s views can be found in Defense Department publications.

On 15 June, the Defense Department published *Decade of War, Volume 1 Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*. According to the study:

In general, operations during the first half of the decade were often marked by numerous missteps and challenges as the U.S. government and military applied a strategy and force suited for a different threat and environment. Operations in the second half of the decade often featured successful adaptation to overcome these challenges.



Romney expresses concern that unless we update and replace the aging military equipment, the military will not be able to effectively perform its missions.

In other areas, both President Obama and Governor Romney are pretty much in agreement on what the threats are but not surprisingly have differences in how to approach them. For instance, looking at China, the Obama administration wants to retain freedom of the seas in the region but stresses working with allies and within the rules of international law. Romney says his policy is not anti-China but he stresses the importance of military power in discouraging aggressive behavior from China presumably as that nation pursues disputed territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Conclusion

We are a nation still at war. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote about the necessity of removing your enemy’s hope for victory. Neither the Taliban

nor al-Qaeda appears ready to admit defeat, and according to a September survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 69% of Americans say the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not made the U.S. any safer from terrorism. Whoever wins the elections will face a complex and unpredictable security environment.

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ISRAEL

By Ben Moscovitch

- ✓ *How should the U.S. react to the threat to Israel posed by a nuclear Iran?*
- ✓ *Is there any way to jump-start the peace process?*
- ✓ *What approach should the U.S. administration take toward the Palestinians?*

BECAUSE OF the tenor of the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign, every difference between President Obama and Governor Romney assumes the proportion of a colossal ideological battle, with scorched earth separating the candidates' entrenched ideological views. Globally, that same fervor dominates debates on Israel, Palestine and the fate of the larger Middle East, often resulting in all-or-nothing opinions that either demonize Israel as an oppressive apartheid regime or accuse Palestinians of supporting the targeted killing of innocent children.

Israel, a tiny country roughly the size of New Jersey, might appear to be a secondary concern for Americans facing tough policy choices on health care, taxes and immigration. However, as the so-called Arab Spring chang-

es the region's political dynamics, dictators massacre their own citizens and small altercations could ignite chaos, future U.S. involvement in the Middle East could hinge on the actions—or inactions—of Israel, making it critical to American interests.

While Israel generates intense emotions and Democrats and Republicans wage their own wars this election cycle, the views of President Obama and Governor Romney are largely comparable, with only minor differences in approach to Israel and its chief concern, Iran.

Iran: The Gorilla in the Room

Thwarting Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons has become Israel's top priority, as Iran comes closer to obtaining nuclear weapons capabilities and continues its rhetoric threatening to wipe Israel off the map. Given Israel's size, it would only take one bomb, and Israelis are not interested in gambling that Iran will not follow through on its threats. Israel has vowed to act unilaterally to derail Iran's nuclear program, but questions about U.S. policy toward Iran, and toward Israel's policy on Iran, remain. Will the U.S. take the lead role in a strike on Iran, or will it actively oppose any military attempt to set back the Iranian nuclear program? Will the U.S. support an Israeli attack on Iran at all, perhaps by using more aggressive covert tactics, or will the U.S. continue to rely on varying degrees of economic sanctions?

President Obama has declared that a nuclear Iran is “completely counter to Israel's security interests” and “the national security interests of the U.S.,” and has left all options on the table—including a military contingency—to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The Obama administration has implemented some measures to derail Iran's nuclear ambitions, such as allegedly assisting the development of computer viruses to target the Iranian nuclear program, increasing sanctions against the regime, and supporting Israel's Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system.

White House critics, though, argue that all these steps have not only failed to slow the Iran nuclear program, but have also permitted substantial advances during the last three years, such as increased uranium production capacity and the development of more-advanced enrichment processes.

Meanwhile, Romney has called for additional and tougher sanctions, support for Iranian protestors against the regime and the development of a missile defense system in Europe.

Nearing the height of the Iran nuclear crisis this summer, Romney even traveled to Jerusalem, where he pledged support for “any and all measures” to thwart the Iranian program's development. While his comments on Iran drew praise, Romney backers also cited his mere attendance in Israel as indicative of the GOP nominee's stance toward the Jewish state, especially given that Obama has not yet traveled to Jerusalem as President.



Regardless of all the attention to perceived differences between the candidates, Romney and Obama agree that an Iranian nuclear weapon is unacceptable. Where they actually differ is on the priority given to certain policies, such as supporting the Iranian opposition.

Laying Peace-Process Blame

Although Obama and Romney hold slightly different views on U.S. policy toward the peace process, the issue is a far second to the Iran nuclear threat, chiefly because that issue has reached a critical juncture while peace talks have stagnated for years, due to both Israeli and Palestinian intransigence.

Resolving the long-stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process would put the gem in any future president's crown, but that accomplishment has eluded both Democrats and Republicans for more than two decades. At least four administrations have devoted considerable time to resolving the dispute.

Obama angered the U.S. pro-Israel community in 2011 when he declared support for a peace deal based on 1967 borders but with mutually agreed-upon land swaps to account for new realities, including that Israelis established several cities—a.k.a. settlements—within the West Bank. Although that premise has long been the foundation to a two-state solution, that declaration from a sitting president fueled the larger perception that U.S. policy now reflects more antagonism toward Israel and its conservative leader Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

That sentiment helped shape Romney's Israel platform, with the GOP presidential nominee deriding Obama for “[throwing] Israel under the bus with regards to '67 borders as a starting point for negotiations.”

Romney also espouses a much firmer approach vis-à-vis the Palestinians, threatening to reduce aid to Ramallah if they seek unilateral recognition at the United Nations or form a government with Hamas. His platform reflects similar comments during Republican presidential primary debates, when Romney blamed the Palestinians for “a greater sense of aggression.” That view could have some merit—the number of mortars and rockets fired into Israel from Gaza this year is on track to double (534 rockets and mortars were fired as of 8/12/12 so far this year compared to 653 in 2011 and 238 in 2010).

Resolving the peace process also came to a head this summer during Romney's Israel trip, when the GOP presidential nominee vowed to relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a city which he called the “capital.” Even though long-standing U.S. policy has not changed during the Obama administration—with Jerusalem referred to as the capital of Israel, the city's status susceptible to final negotiations, and the embassy maintained in Tel Aviv—Romney's visit dredged up apprehension that the President's policies are not in-line with the views of American pro-Israel advocates.



The Pro-Israel Community Carries Weight

Israel's supporters in the U.S.—which include non-Jewish contingents, such as evangelical Protestants—are vocal and have allies in the highest levels of the administration and Congress.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)—the undisputed heavyweight in the pro-Israel community—regularly convenes meetings with both Democratic and Republican Israel supporters, advocating for—among other things—increased sanctions on Iran and opposition to U.N. recognition of Palestinian statehood. A vast majority of members of Congress attend AIPAC's annual policy conference.

Other groups also frame the debate, though to a much lesser extent. J Street, a left-leaning Israel lobby, was initially embraced by the Obama administration, but the White House has since distanced itself from the group following various policy disputes and perception blunders, including J Street's urging the White House not to veto a U.N. resolution condemning Israeli settlement activity.

Conversely, the Emergency Committee for Israel, a conservative-leaning advocacy organization launched by The Weekly Standard editor William Kristol, is already driving the conversation, taking Obama to task on a lackluster Iran policy in high profile television and print advertisements.

Israel: The Outlier

Regardless of the details of their proposals, one thing is clear: both Obama and Romney are deeply devoted to Israel's security and cherish the shared values and strategic goals between the U.S. and its closest ally in the Middle East.

That attitude of Israel as a bipartisan and nonpartisan issue transcends the candidates at the top of the ticket. Democrats and Republicans alike have supported Israel at nearly every turn, and are unlikely to suddenly abandon Israel as it faces its gravest threat yet—a nuclear-armed Iran.

The 2012 presidential election has already spawned vitriolic attacks from the candidates and their surrogates, and Israel has emerged as one more political football to further polarize the U.S. electorate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to the U.S. to press the case against Iran continued to fuel the debate. But in the midst of all that jockeying, Romney and Obama might be more aligned than on nearly any other issue.

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ENERGY

By William Sweet

- ✓ *How much should energy policy focus on renewable sources, such as wind and solar?*
- ✓ *Is developing domestic energy sources, for example, by opening more areas to drilling, a priority?*
- ✓ *What should U.S. policy be toward pipelines from Canada and Mexico?*



WITH THE COST of gasoline in the news daily and the two presidential candidates sharply differentiating themselves on issues like oil drilling and clean tech subsidies, energy would seem to loom large as a campaign theme. Yet there are reasons to doubt whether either candidate will get much traction in energy, starting with its costs.

If gasoline prices were rising sharply and continued to do so until election day, that might be something Romney could make hay of. But gasoline prices were falling during the opening phase of the campaign and at the beginning of the summer were almost exactly what they were a year before, roughly \$3.50 per gallon on average.

Almost uncannily, the same has been true of electricity prices. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American household was paying 12.7 cents per kilowatt-hour in April 2012, the same as in April 2011, and 11.8 in 2008. (That is a little startling because there is almost no direct connection between the prices of gasoline and electricity.) Changes in electricity price levels have been almost imperceptible and not nearly big enough to motivate voters, even though much of what the presidential candidates have had to say about energy has more to do with the sources of electric power than with oil or gasoline.

The point deserves some emphasis because in almost all public discussions of energy, gasoline and electricity tend to get lumped together, and candidates typically differentiate themselves from each other by describing themselves philosophically as pro-production and anti-regulation or as pro-conservation and anti-corporate.

This year's candidates are no exception. The emphasis of President Obama's energy policies has been innovation, alternative energy and clean



tech. That means subsidization of renewable sources like wind and solar, and strong public support for innovative concepts like the smart grid. The 2008 stimulus bill contained upwards of \$10 billion in direct grants and loan guarantees for smart metering, which is expected to pay long-term dividends in terms of both savings and reliability, though short-term results have been somewhat meager.

Regarding climate change, an important aspect of energy policy—though Obama disappointed his base by not pressing for enactment of a cap-and-trade carbon reduction bill—his Environmental Protection Agency has tightened clean air regulation. One important effect has been to discourage continued operation of old, dirty coal-generation plants, a major source of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions.



Romney, for his part, has accused the president of being anti-oil and anti-coal, which he argues are still the country’s most inexpensive fuels and therefore the best way to power economic growth and job creation. He makes no apologies for being in favor of fossil fuels, drilling and mining, and he promises reduce cumbersome environmental regulation by subjecting all proposed rules to cost-benefit analysis. “The U.S. is blessed with a cornucopia of carbon-based energy resources,” declares his energy website.

On oil, Romney sent a clear message with his selection of Oklahoma billionaire Harold Hamm to head his energy advisory team. Hamm is the founder, chairman and CEO of Continental Resources, which boasts of being the largest lease-holder in the Bakken shale oil formation in the northern Great Plains. As for coal, Romney told Ohio voters that in his administration, it “will not be a four-letter word. Instead, we will applaud the industry’s success in consistently expanding electricity output while reducing pollution.”

Romney’s campaign website accused President Obama of having adopted policies that have “stifled” domestic energy and of being “in thrall” to environmentalists. “The Obama administration’s energy policy has been simply incoherent,” says the site. “For instance, it has blocked off-shore drilling in U.S. waters while applauding increased drilling off the coast of Brazil. Similarly, it has blocked construction of a pipeline that would bring Canadian oil to the U.S., knowing full well that the result would be Canadian oil flowing to China instead.”

Yet for all the heated rhetoric, in real life Obama and Romney have a good deal more in common on energy than either would like to acknowledge. Both support nuclear energy, and it’s not at all obvious what Romney could do to jump-start a renaissance that Obama has not already tried.

Though Obama naturally became a good deal more cautious about deep-water oil drilling following BP’s catastrophic Gulf spill, he has quietly encouraged exploratory drilling in shallower waters off Alaska, as detailed in a lengthy New York Times article last May. Romney, to be sure, promises to go further, opening the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to drilling. But Obama can at least argue he has helped the country make big strides.



During his presidency, an oil boom has taken place in North Dakota, helping boost the country's production and free it of foreign imports. Last year, as North Dakota leapt ahead of California and Alaska to be the country's second largest producer after Texas, the U.S. registered the second largest increase in oil production of any country; its current oil production is 25% higher than in 2008, and its net imports have shrunk to 42% of national consumption from 60% in 2005.

Even more important than that, Obama has fully embraced the revolution in "unconventional natural gas"—hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" as it is popularly known—which is by far the most important development in U.S. energy of the last decade. Because newly extractable natural gas has turned out to be so ubiquitous, gas prices have plummeted to historic lows, translating not only into lower home heating and electricity bills but also lower greenhouse gas emissions, as utilities switch from dirty coal to relatively clean gas.

The Obama administration, having initially described its policies mainly in terms of green tech and clean tech, now characterizes them as an "all of the above" approach, which is not all that readily distinguishable from the Republicans' preferred philosophy, sometimes caricatured as "drill, drill, drill." So, when all the exaggerated differences between the candidates are cleared away and the vast areas of agreement are taken into account, the real issues dividing the candidates might be summarized in five Romney talking points:

- pass legislation to bar EPA from regulating carbon, so as to nullify a Supreme Court decision that affirmed the agency's authority to do so under clean air legislation
- expedite resource development and permitting, and reduce costly environmental regulation
- open U.S. energy reserves more aggressively
- push pipelines and partnerships with Canada and Mexico
- confine subsidization of alternative energy to basic research and development



On the campaign trail, Romney will seize every opportunity to take the president to task for ill-advised subsidies to startups like Solyndra, which he has called "irresponsible and unethical," and for stalling on the proposed Keystone pipeline, which would bring crude oil from Canadian tar sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast. But in the absence of there being anything terribly wrong in U.S. energy and a lot of things looking better than they have in decades, it is doubtful whether the Republican candidate will get far with such attacks.

Romney has promised to make the U.S. more oil independent, so as to "end our strategic vulnerability to an oil shutoff by nations like Iran and Russia and Venezuela." But in fact, though Romney has called Russia America's most significant strategic threat, the U.S. is not a significant importer of Russian oil—and, for that matter, the Middle East is not the

major supplier of oil to the U.S.

In the end, when election day comes, the most important single aspect of energy will be, simply, whether gasoline prices are falling or climbing in the weeks before election day. However little or much oil the U.S. imports, its citizens pay the world price. Romney as a skilled free-market businessman well understands that, and Obama surely has learned it if he did not know already.

In other words, whether or not energy turns out to be an important element in the November election will be, when all is said and done, pure luck and not a function of where the two candidates have positioned themselves.

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