

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



The Legacy of the Obama Doctrine

IN THIS ISSUE

Mark Moyar • Thomas H. Henriksen • Barry Strauss

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Leaving Behind “Leading from Behind”

Mark Moyar

In 2008, Barack Obama campaigned as a foreign policy moderate, wary of the aggressive interventionism of the George W. Bush administration but willing to take on a leading role for America in combating particularly ominous threats. Although promising to pull the remaining American forces out of Iraq, he vowed to send additional troops to Afghanistan. He said that he would collaborate with other nations to a greater extent than Bush, but at the same time served notice that he would act unilaterally when vital US interests were at stake.

During his first years as president, Obama generally conformed to these pledges. He authorized several increases in the US military presence in Afghanistan. He began withdrawing US forces from Iraq, albeit at a slower pace than promised in the campaign but one that nonetheless put the administration on a course for complete withdrawal. He worked with foreign allies on trade deals and used drones unilaterally against extremists in Pakistan.

The foreign policy of Obama underwent profound change in 2011, a year that saw the departure of Robert Gates and other career foreign policy heavyweights. During 2011, Obama pressured Congress into steep cuts to the defense budget, while simultaneously formulating a new national security strategy that promised to defend the nation with substantially fewer resources. Under the new strategy, the United States would no longer fight large wars of counterinsurgency, as it had in Iraq and Afghanistan, and would instead rely on special operations forces and drones to defeat the remaining terrorists. The US Army and Marine Corps would hence be cut by 100,000 troops. The new strategy also called for a pivot to Asia, the continent on which America’s future ostensibly hinged, where American air and naval power rendered a large ground presence unnecessary.

Obama viewed greater reliance on the military strength of allies as a means of compensating for the reduction in American military strength. The first place where he tested this proposition was Libya, where he joined forces with the French and British in bombing and, eventually, ousting Mu’ammar Gadhafi. Obama’s decision to restrict American participation in the bombing campaign and leave guidance of the campaign to the French and British elicited the remark from an unnamed Obama adviser that Obama’s

Libya strategy was one of “leading from behind.” When rebels toppled Gadhafi, the Obama administration heralded it as vindication of its strategy.

The Obama administration decided to entrust the security of American diplomats in the new Libya to local Libyan militias. That decision led to the killing of the US ambassador at a poorly protected diplomatic facility in Benghazi and contributed to the collapse of the Libyan government that had taken power after Gadhafi’s demise. Obama eventually conceded that his administration’s failure to secure the peace in Libya was the worst mistake of his presidency.

The problems encountered in Libya did not, however, convince Obama to abandon the notion of leading from behind. He let the Saudis take the lead in defeating extremists in Yemen after its government imploded and left it to the French to thwart al-Qaeda’s bid to overrun a disintegrating Mali. Obama stayed America’s hand as the Ugandans took charge of counterterrorism against al-Shabaab in Somalia, and he let the Iraqis, Iranians, and Kurds lead the battles against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. He deferred to the Germans and French in dealing with Vladimir Putin on Ukraine. In few of these places have America’s allies lived up to America’s expectations.¹

Opinion is divided as to the origins of Obama’s foreign policy turn. Some commentators emphasize Obama’s preoccupation with domestic affairs and his approval ratings.² Others attribute leading from behind to Obama’s ideological distrust of American power and America more generally.³ More sympathetic observers contend that Obama has been driven by popular disenchantment with foreign entanglements and his own recognition of the limitations of American power.⁴

The evidence does not support the argument that Obama was pushed into isolationism by the public, if by the public is meant the American people as a whole. Obama campaigned in 2008 on escalating the war in Afghanistan because of the perception that the American people favored such an escalation. Support for that war, and for overseas engagements in general, did not decline until Obama demonstrated that he himself was



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disenchanted. A more plausible case can be made that Obama was influenced by the opinion of his liberal Democratic base.

Since the 1960s, large segments of the Democratic Party have advocated a reduced role in foreign affairs for the United States on the principle that unilateralism is tantamount to moral arrogance. The Carter and Clinton administrations adhered at times to multilateralism on these grounds. But Obama has done so with an unprecedented consistency and, in the process, has brought sizable elements of the public along with him. The longer that such an idea informs American policy, the more likely it is to become an enduring feature of American policy and American public sentiment.

Within history cases can be found to suggest that this feature will endure and cases to suggest that it will be overturned. The decline of the British Empire after World War II, for instance, was accompanied by a permanent loss of interest in unilateral leadership on the world stage. On the other hand, the United States rebounded in the 1980s after the retreat and demoralization of the Carter years.

Exploring such analogies offers useful insights into America's future prospects. Britain's retreat from global leadership was to a substantial extent driven by the loss of colonies and declining power relative to the superpowers. The United States is declining in relative terms to China and India, which are experiencing economic growth at much higher rates, spurring arguments that the United States should prepare to yield many of its leadership responsibilities.⁵ Another school of thought holds that American economic stagnation and political turmoil threaten America's ability to remain in its position of global preeminence.⁶ But others, like Josef Joffe and Robert Lieber, are confident that the United States still has the resources and cultural fortitude to be the preeminent leader if it so chooses.⁷

The rebound of the 1980s depended on the leadership of Ronald Reagan, who single-handedly replaced an aura of gloom with one of national confidence and assertive internationalism. If the American people of 2017 are similar to those of 1981 in their receptivity to a more active and robust American presence on the international scene, then the next president should be able to convince them to move in a new foreign policy direction. It could be argued that the receptivity will be different in 2017 because of the rise of the Millennial Generation, which seems to have little interest in American leadership overseas. On the other hand, one could argue that the population of 1981 contained a similar generation in the Baby Boomers.

Whether the next president will choose to lead in the way of Reagan is a different matter. Both candidates have made statements indicating that they want America to lead more often from the front, but history has shown time and again the tendency of presidential policy to diverge from campaign rhetoric. Both of the candidates have expressed

skepticism about international engagement through their harsh criticism of free-trade agreements. The ascent of Donald Trump has been interpreted in some quarters as proof that large segments of the population are in agreement with Trump's repudiation of the aggressive and open internationalism of the Bush years, but it could also be argued plausibly that his appeal was driven more by his charisma or his promises to revive the American economy. Both Trump and Clinton may be tempted to leave world problems to others because those problems have been made intractable by recent events. Syria, Iran, Libya, Yemen, and Ukraine do not seem good places for a new president to seek foreign policy achievements.

1 For accounts of Obama's foreign policy, see Mark Moyar, *Strategic Failure: How President Obama's Drone Warfare, Defense Cuts, and Military Amateurism Have Imperiled America* (New York: Threshold, 2015); David Rothkopf, *National Insecurity: American Leadership in an Age of Fear* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014).

2 Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

3 Robert G. Kaufman, *Dangerous Doctrine: How Obama's Grand Strategy Weakened America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016).

4 Mark Landler, *Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power* (New York: Random House, 2016); Derek Chollet, *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016).

5 Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

6 Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

7 Josef Joffe, *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies* (New York: Liveright, 2013); Robert J. Lieber, *Retreat and Its Consequences: American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).



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Foreign Policy Course Correction

Thomas H. Henriksen

Barack Obama's retrenchment policies may be unprecedented in degree but not in kind. Other presidents have implemented pullbacks from an overseas engagement, usually after a war. These retreats have all been followed by pendulum swings back toward reengagement. This pattern will, no doubt, hold after Obama. Historical determinism does not account for the oscillations, which are due to partisanship between the major political parties, domestic considerations, and ideological convictions of the commanders in chief as well as the need for course corrections.

America's most noted strategic withdrawal from international affairs came in the wake of World War I. The interwar years are considered an isolationist chapter in America's past. Pearl Harbor dragged the United States back into world affairs. Following World War II, America's natural pendulum swung inward away from foreign commitments but was aborted by the Soviet Union's global designs. Moscow's aggression compelled Harry Truman to take up the defense of the free world.

Even with its four-decade long anti-Soviet stance, the United States experienced bouts of retrenchment during the Cold War, particularly after disenchantment set in with the Vietnam War. President Richard Nixon announced to his allies a step back from unconditional defense guarantees in his Nixon doctrine. Jimmy Carter presided over diminishing US power.

Ronald Reagan reversed Washington's global withdrawal. He confronted the Soviet incursion in Afghanistan as well as Moscow's backing of national

liberation fronts in Nicaragua and Angola. He rebuilt America's military and advanced an antimissile defensive system. By escalating the East-West competition, the former California governor shoved the Kremlin over the financial breaking point.

With end of the Cold War, the engagement-disengagement cycles more or less conformed to the changes in American presidencies. Hardly had George Herbert Walker Bush strode into office than he found himself locked in a feud with Panama's strongman. Long story short, Bush invaded Panama with more than twenty thousand US troops and installed a democratically elected leader.

Then President Bush dispatched a half a million American troops to roll back Iraq's conquest of Kuwait in 1990. After defeating Saddam Hussein, Bush anchored a large US military presence in the Persian Gulf. Bush's Pentagon set up no-fly zones in north and south Iraq; in the meantime the White House got the United Nations to search for suspected nuclear and chemical weapons.

As the Soviet Union collapsed, Bush secured the Red Army's evacuation from Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, and German membership in NATO. He arm-twisted Britain and France to accept a reunited Germany, which they had historically feared. In the twilight of his one-term presidency, Bush committed thousands of US troops to Somalia on a humanitarian mission to feed a starving population. His heavy-duty internationalism was cycled back by his successor.



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Determined to focus like a laser on the economy, Bill Clinton came to grief when his administration allowed mission creep to draw US military forces into a street battle to promote nation-building in clan-torn Somalia. That debacle, plus the White House's pronounced domestic orientation, exercised a powerful restraint on Clinton's international policies. He resisted invading Haiti to restore the ousted democratic president, despite intense lobbying from the Congressional Black Caucus, until his hand was forced. He avoided intervention into Rwanda, where interethnic violence killed eight hundred thousand people. He dragged his feet before entering into Bosnia's civil war until shamed by his reelection rival, Republican Bob Dole, into intervening in 1995. When the Kosovo crisis broke, Clinton's bet only on US and allied airpower nearly failed to muscle Serbia into granting autonomy to the Muslim enclave.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, George Walker Bush restarted the interventionist cycle by invading Afghanistan and Iraq. President Bush also began a global war on terrorism with security hubs in the Philippines and the Horn of Africa, plus the Middle East. He also staunchly backed democracy movements in the Republic of Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Lebanon, while militarily intervening in Liberia and Haiti to save democracy.

Barack Hussein Obama stepped into the White House determined to rotate the international pendulum toward withdrawal. He prematurely evacuated US ground forces from a stabilizing Iraq and reduced American combat units in Afghanistan, thereby endangering the political fate of both nations. Rather than perceiving the Arab Spring revolt against local strongmen as an historic opportunity, Obama conducted a leading from behind strategy away from assisting democratic movements in Libya, Syria, and

Yemen. The consequences included the spread of Islamist terrorism, Russian intervention into Syria, Iranian expansion toward the Mediterranean, and the flood of several hundred thousand Syrian refugees into Europe.

The Obama administration pulled the policy pendulum toward greater disassociation as Russia seized the Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In Asia, the administration's "strategic patience" toward a nuclear-arming North Korea translated into do-nothingness for eight years in the face of Pyongyang's relentless missile and nuclear development. The administration's much-ballyhooed pivot to Asia struck a strong rhetorical chord but overall lacked follow-through. The clearest note in the president's recessional sounded in the nuclear deal with Iran, which was premised on disassociating America from the Middle East, leaving Tehran to flex its rejuvenated power.

Given that political flows come after ebbs in history, plus the singular need for a reset in Obama's flinching brand of strategic detachment, the odds favor that the next administration will reengage in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East to restore the deterrence option in the US security posture. Like past newcomers who have settled into inward-looking White Houses, they will change what they perceive as an overcorrection by their predecessor.



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From Leading from Behind to Fighting on the Frontier

Barry Strauss

Every empire or great power, no matter how interventionist it is, undergoes periods of retrenchment. For example, after the Roman emperor Trajan (r. AD 98–117) conquered Dacia (Romania) and fought an exhausting, at first successful but ultimately failed, war in Mesopotamia (Iraq), his successor Hadrian (r. AD 117–38) pulled back. Hadrian accepted defeat in Mesopotamia, gave up part of Dacia, and put the empire on a defensive footing. Hadrian's Wall in Britain is the most famous but not the only example of an empire that preferred to look inward behind fixed frontier defenses rather than add new conquests. Retrenchment, however, never lasts, because it tempts foreign aggressors. Under the emperor Marcus Aurelius (r. AD 161–80), Rome was drawn into a new cycle of war.

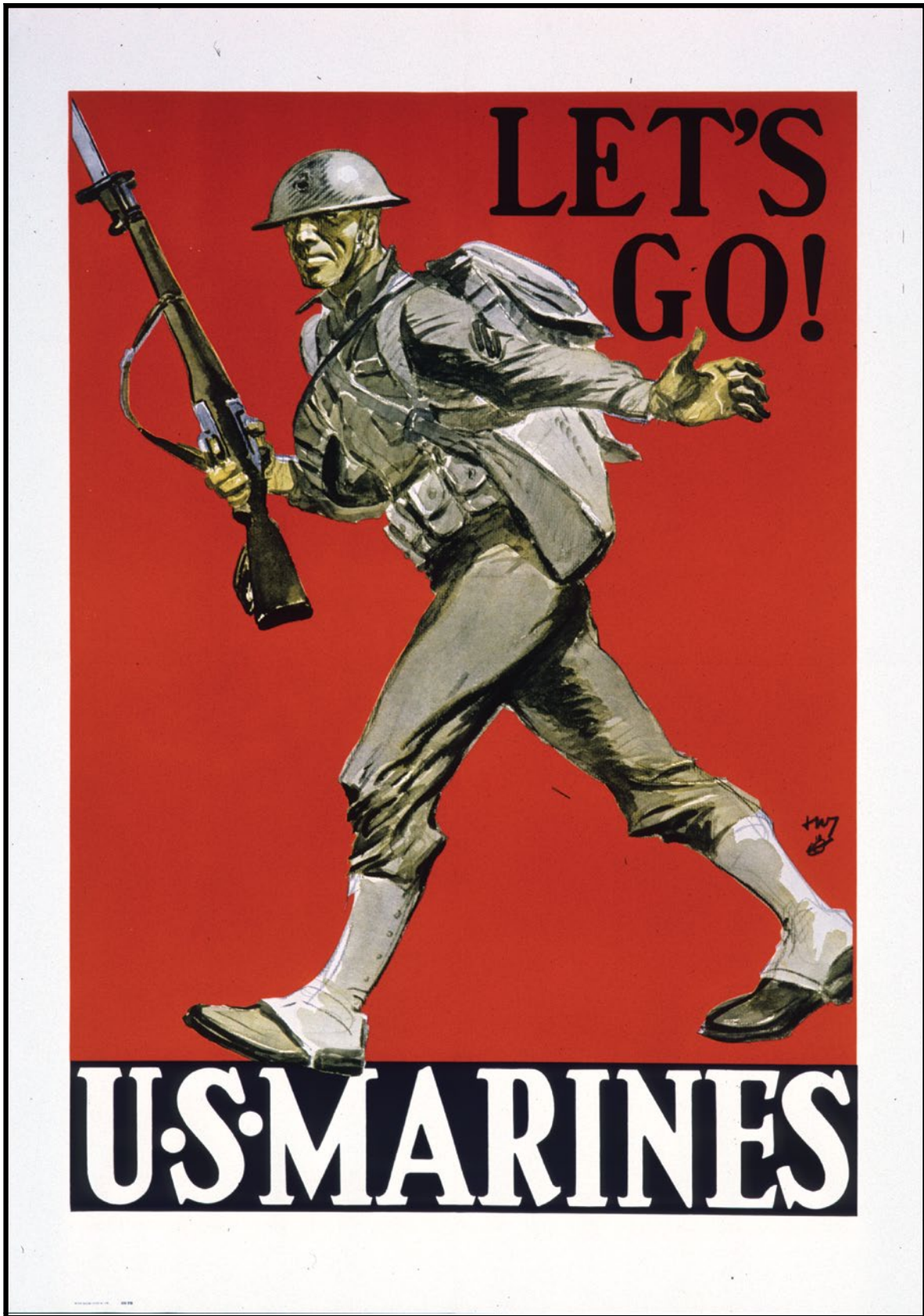
There are other examples. China throughout its history has alternated between looking out and looking in. Or take Korea. After the disastrous Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592 and a massive Korean effort (with Chinese help) to maintain independence, Korea turned inward for several centuries and became the Hermit Kingdom. In 1895 Japan invaded Korea again, this time successfully.

After government bankruptcy caused by its effort in the American War of Independence, France turned inward in the most dramatic way possible in 1789: it exploded into revolution. But the domestic upheaval soon unleashed new forces that brought France even

more forcefully into war and intervention abroad for the next twenty-five years.

More recently, Britain's policy of splendid isolation did not survive the rise of Wilhelmine Germany after 1890 and its challenge to the maritime supremacy of the British Royal Navy. The result was that Britain was drawn into the bloody battles of the First World War in 1914. Then there is the infamous example of British and French exhaustion after that conflict, combined with American isolationism, that left the western democracies unable to stand up to Nazi aggression in the 1930s when they could have defeated it easily. Instead, they had to fight the Second World War.

As the cycles of history suggest, the Obama administration's doctrine of lead from behind is unlikely to mark a permanent departure from the engaged American foreign policy of the postwar era. Even if the next president continues the policy at first, he or she is not likely to maintain that position for long. American interests are just too vast and diffuse, and today's world too interconnected, for isolationism to be viable. Besides which, the chickens of Obama's withdrawal are coming home to roost. From Syria to the South China Sea, from the pouring of refugees into Europe to the turmoil in the Baltic, from North Korea to Ukraine, and in the empowering of Iran through the US nuclear agreement with that country, the world is a more dangerous place today than it was in 2008. Turkey is unstable and Libya is in meltdown.



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Meanwhile, populism is threatening the elite globalist economic and political agenda from one corner of the West to another.

I've been traveling in Europe the last few months, and I've heard a number of people express concern lest America withdraw further and give Russia a free hand. Finns, Poles, and Swedes voiced the greatest fears, understandably, but I've heard similar anxiety from Britons and Italians. They see the problem symbolized not just in Obama-era disengagement but also in the candidacy of Donald Trump and his cry of "America First."

What Trump's foreign policy would be were he to win the election is an open question, however, because for every dovish sign he has given (e.g., toward Vladimir Putin) he has also offered a hawkish proposal (e.g., toward ISIS). Likewise, Hillary Clinton's foreign policy, although surely more conventional than Trump's, if she wins, is also less than an open book. The former secretary of state has been alternately hard-nosed and accommodating, so it is hard to know where she will ultimately come down.

In a sense, though, it doesn't matter. The next president will not have the luxury of withdrawing American power. Neither Clinton nor Trump agrees with Obama's opinion that America tends to do more harm than good when it intervenes abroad. Neither one is likely to be an icon of the left, like Obama, much less the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Either one will be faced with crises and long-term trends that require the use of American power or the risk of severe damage to American interests.

The twenty-five years after Hadrian's death were the most peaceful in the history of the Roman Empire, but peace did not last. Rome was rapidly drawn into major wars abroad again, both in Mesopotamia and on the Danube frontier. In a sense those wars never ended until the final fall of the western empire centuries later. Things move faster nowadays, however.

The next American president will no more enjoy the luxury of leading from behind than Marcus Aurelius did when he left Rome for Central Europe to defend the empire's frontiers.



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Greece—and Western Civilization was named one of the best books of 2004 by the *Washington Post*. His latest book, *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination* (Simon & Schuster, March 2015), has been hailed as "clear and compelling" by *TIME* and received three starred reviews from book journals (*Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*). His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and the Genius of Leadership* (Simon & Schuster, May 2012), was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg.

Time to Dump the Baby— and the Bathwater

Angelo M. Codevilla

The premise that the current foreign policy's major features (e.g., Iran deal, tergiversation regarding ISIS, etc.) are peculiar to the Obama administration is mistaken. In fact, those policies are manifestations or extrapolations of attitudes long-standing and pervasive among US policy makers of both parties. As such, they are sure to transcend Obama. They will characterize US foreign policy unless and until these officials, academics, and media figures are replaced by persons with different mentalities.

Obama's "Iran deal" makes explicit what, implicitly, has been the core of US policy toward Iran for more than a quarter century, namely, that the United States would neither undertake whatever economic or military measures might be necessary to preclude Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons nor do whatever might be necessary to change Iran's regime or even isolate it. Protestations notwithstanding, none of Obama's many critics is advocating any measures that would keep Iran nonnuclear or change its regime. Releasing Iran's frozen funds, facilitating trade, and so forth adds big carrots to a long-standing policy of small sticks.

The restraints that the Obama administration has placed on Israel's reaction to the peril of Iran's nuclear program are much in line with the Bush team's shutdown of Israel's military effort in Lebanon in 2006 and even with the Reagan administration's rescue of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon 1982

and its punishment of Israel for striking Iraq's nuclear program in 1981. These restraints have flowed from the increasing influence of anti-Israeli (part of broader anti-Western) sentiments within America's bipartisan ruling class. This too is continuing and growing.

Although Obama's unwillingness to send large numbers of US troops against ISIS differs quantitatively from his predecessor's commitment of the

POLL: IS IT POSSIBLE TO REVERSE THE POLICIES OF THE OBAMA DOCTRINE?

- "Lead from behind" is now a permanent policy; Obama simply channels the public's growing isolationism.
- Given \$20 trillion in debt, fiscal reality, not ideology, governs reduced American commitment abroad.
- The next president will be more proactive than Obama, but not as engaged abroad as our policy before 2009.
- American interests abroad transcend particular administrations, and we will soon see a return to proactive leadership.
- The world is a mess; like it or not, the US will become more engaged than ever to restore stable order.

US armed forces to Afghanistan and Iraq, it is precisely the same with regard to the essential element policy, namely, like Bush's team, Obama's is intellectually and morally incapable of identifying an enemy whose destruction would achieve peace and then of destroying that enemy—in other words, of fighting wars in the dictionary meaning of the term. For a half century the nation's war colleges, like the rest of our academic institutions, have taught that military as well as civilian statesmanship consists of assuming that all sides in international controversies necessarily work within a matrix of choices to achieve limited objectives and hence that fighting for victory is counterproductive. Obama's successors are likely, as did his Republican predecessors, to see the struggle against

terrorists as something with which we must learn to live indefinitely.

Unless those persons who take over in America are possessed of a mentality that is entirely outside that of our current bipartisan ruling class, the number of US troops sent or not sent hither or yon will not alter the pathological state of no-peace-no-war-no-victory in which we have been living.

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Obama's Foreign Policy: No Easy Fix

Thomas Donnelly

All of the Obama administration's strategic initiatives will endure beyond the next president's term; three of them are likely to have more profound effects.

The fundamental tenet of the Obama doctrine has been to deconstruct and delegitimize the global order built on Anglo-American political principles and to reverse the previous course of US strategy. The world that America made rested on five[three?] pillars: preserving a favorable balance of power in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East; sustaining sufficient military power to lead coalitions in each of these theaters; and, by promoting Americans' sense of exceptionalism and moral ambition, preserving the domestic political will to exercise geopolitical leadership.

President Obama has achieved measures of success in each of these areas. The least change has come in those areas—Europe and East Asia—where the efforts of previous presidents were longest-standing, most institutionalized, most deeply rooted, and, consequently, the balance of power most durable. Americans have been directly involved in Europe for a century, been the dominant military power since 1945, and the dispositive power since the end of the Cold War. Disturbing as they have been, Russia's land-grabs in Georgia and Ukraine are not by themselves serious challenges to the American-made peace of Europe; Russia will not soon be a true great power. The United States retains the means to rebuild a new containment policy and military deterrent. Likewise in East Asia, Chinese expansionism has moved at a relatively cautious pace—though its direction has been

clear to the nations of the region, the appetite there for an American-led containment coalition and more robust deterrent posture is palpable. The military risk would be somewhat greater—the People's Liberation Army is a more dangerous force than Putin's "little green men"—but the US military still has the capacity and could quickly acquire selected new capabilities to restore a favorable balance.

In the Middle East, where the challenge is immeasurably greater; historians well may come to regard 2009 as the high-water mark of American power in the region. Determined to end all direct US military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama years have been witness to the near-total collapse of the previous order. Thanks to the recently concluded deal with Iran and his strategic abandonment of America's traditional Sunni and Israeli allies, President Obama has raised Tehran from the gutter and given its hegemonic hopes a tremendous boost. Finally, the utter confusion of the Sunni world leaves the Islamic State with the leading claim to be the champion of most of the world's Muslims. This is a profound and disastrous shift; even a succession of presidents committed to a rollback strategy to reestablish a favorable regional balance of power would face an uncertain and uphill path.

With the collusion of the congressional leadership of the Republican Party, President Obama has wreaked havoc on the US military and encouraged Americans to turn inward in a narcissistic way. The Department of Defense has not bought a substantial

fleet of any single weapons system since the Reagan years; the few things that have been procured—such as the F-22 fighter—are too few in number to maintain the kind of operational advantages of the past. But, even more important, the force is way too small; even at the peak of the Iraq surge, the United States could not supply or sustain adequate numbers of ground troops to conduct simultaneous campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The continued postconflict drawdown, enshrined in the 2011 Budget Control Act—an eerie echo of the British 10-year rule of 1919—ensures this weakness will continue for the foreseeable future.

Finally, the commander in chief has helped accelerate the demilitarization—even the demasculinization—of American political culture; “Pajama Boy” is the yeoman of the twenty-first century. To be sure, the martial virtues have been called into greater question through several generations; this was not a trend invented by Obama. Thus, when the White House

speaks of a desire to escape the “rut of history,” to transcend the normal nasty business of statecraft and power, even conservatives lend an ear. Yet the Obama administration is the first to give expression to this postmodern yearning, to give substance to a dream. Elsewhere, military power may still be the ultimate resort of kings, and it may take some time and some unpleasant lessons for American elites to relearn this truth.

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Cleaning Up the Mess

Andrew Roberts

It is one of the glories of the US Constitution that although presidential administrations must abide by the laws made by previous ones until they are repealed, foreign policy initiatives that are unworthy of a great nation can be discarded almost immediately. This is what will happen in November next year; indeed, the Obama administration's keenness to argue that the Iranian nuclear deal did not constitute a formal treaty—to prevent the Senate from debating and perhaps refusing to ratify it—will make it all the easier for an incoming administration to denounce it. The closest historical equivalents are the Reagan administration's ditching of several previous administrations' policy of détente toward the Soviet Union once it came to power in January 1981 and the Thatcher ministry's equally swift and almost contemporaneous dumping of the Foreign Office's appeasement policy towards the same great power.

Lord Palmerston, the great British prime minister, once said that Britain had no permanent allies or enemies, only permanent interests. Any incoming administration will recognize that President Obama's foreign policy initiatives toward Iran, Cuba, Russia, Egypt, China, and Israel have been uniformly disastrous for the United States' interests and standing in the world, reversing some and modifying others. Iran can be told pretty much immediately that the nuclear deal is dead, though it will be a great test of any incoming president's diplomatic skills to persuade America's friends, allies, and frenemies to reimpose

sanctions on Iran once they have been lifted and trade deals negotiated.

Of the other Obama foreign policy initiatives, some are already moribund—such as Mrs. Clinton's notorious reset toward Russia—but others, including the rapprochement with the Castro regime in Cuba, will be more complicated to restore to the status quo ante. Nonetheless, initiatives such as the so-called pivot to Asia and the self-laceration of America inherent in Obama's Cairo speech will find few echoes in future foreign policy making. The humiliations over Syrian red lines and the Benghazi murders, which will long stain the Obama presidency before the bar of history, will need to be avenged. Within a year or so of his leaving office, President Obama's initiatives—such as the refusal to help the Iranian liberals and democrats during the Arab Spring—will be seen as a particularly cringe-making period in modern American history, not as immutable demarche that can bind future governments.

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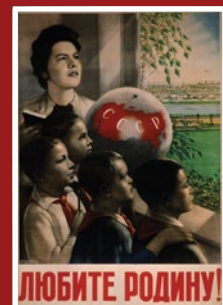
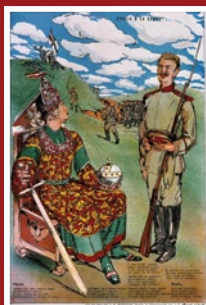
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is there a way for America to reengage the Middle East and stop the general chaos?
2. How do we reset "reset" with Vladimir Putin's Russia?
3. Which nations are now our closest friends, and which are our most dangerous enemies?
4. Is a regional war likely somewhere in the next six months?
5. Is current American foreign policy more akin to that of the 1930s or the 1950s?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Derek Chollet, *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World* (PublicAffairs, 2016). <http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com/book/the-long-game/9781610396608>
- Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (Oxford University Press, 2015). <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-obama-doctrine-9780190202620?cc=us&lang=en&>
- Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* (Basic Books, 2013). <http://www.cfr.org/politics-and-strategy/foreign-policy-begins-home/p29767>
- Josef Joffe, *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies* (Liveright, 2013). <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/The-Myth-of-Americas-Decline/>
- Robert G. Kaufman, *Dangerous Doctrine: How Obama's Grand Strategy Weakened America* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016). http://kentuckypress.com/live/title_detail.php?titleid=3848#.WBKU6RSRZBt
- Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (Oxford University Press, 2012). <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/no-ones-world-9780199739394?cc=us&lang=en&>
- Mark Landler, *Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power* (Random House, 2016). <http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/253142/alter-egos-by-mark-landler/9780812998856/>
- Robert J. Lieber, *Retreat and its Consequences: American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2016). <http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/politics-international-relations/international-relations-and-international-organisations/retreat-and-its-consequences-american-foreign-policy-and-problem-world-order?format=PB&isbn=9781316506714>
- Mark Moyar, *Strategic Failure: How President Obama's Drone Warfare, Defense Cuts, and Military Amateurism Have Imperiled America* (Threshold, 2015). <http://www.simonandschuster.com.au/books/Strategic-Failure/Mark-Moyar/9781476713274>
- David Rothkopf, *National Insecurity: American Leadership in an Age of Fear* (PublicAffairs, 2014). <http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com/book/hardcover/national-insecurity/9781610393409>
- Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0* (W.W. Norton, 2011). <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/978-0-393-08180-0/>

IN THE NEXT ISSUE PUTIN AND RUSSIAN NATIONALISM



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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