

Obama: The First Hundred Days (II)

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As we saw last time, the Obama administration is reviving the New Deal's reliance on active government and extending it through an ambitious and innovative set of policies. When it comes to foreign policy, however, its program so far is more rhetorical than active. To reverse Teddy Roosevelt's famous adage, Obama apparently intends to speak loudly but carry a small stick. The columnist Tom Friedman summed this reality up nicely a while ago when he observed that President Obama has quite a few banks weighing on his mind, but the West Bank isn't one of them. Friedman has also said, correctly in my opinion, that in foreign policy the President seems to be adopting a "middle ground strategy – doing enough to avoid collapse but not enough to solve the problems." In other words, whereas change is the order of the day domestically, stabilization is the watchword in foreign policy.

The reason for this sharp difference between activism in domestic policy and minimalism in foreign policy is clear. The domestic economic crisis is the overriding priority. In dealing with dangers beyond our borders that do not affect the economy, the overriding concern is to maintain the status quo at the least possible cost. There are only two unavoidable and partial exceptions. First, because the economic crisis has a serious international dimension, monetary, fiscal, and trade policy must be coordinated with the rest of the G-20. Second, because domestic efforts to

develop alternative energy sources and deal with greenhouse emissions require international coordination, Obama will have us rejoin the global effort later this year in Copenhagen.

These two initiatives are important and should not be denigrated as if they were only shadow-boxing. Otherwise, however, the contrast between the President's domestic activism and his international restraint is striking – and troubling. Troubling for at least two reasons. The first is that in a lawless world, dialogue and diplomacy can succeed only if they are backed up by the threat of serious sanctions. If at all possible, these sanctions should not be unilateral and American only, but they need to be in the background and they need to be credible. The second reason it is dangerous just to bank on keeping the status quo is that it avoids an effort to develop creative solutions to problems that can sometimes get worse if left to fester. I will begin by giving a couple of examples of what I mean by this caveat. Then I will provide an overview that emphasizes the mismatch between major challenges we face and the administration's early approach to them. Finally, I will conclude with an overall assessment and invite your questions.

First, a couple of examples to clarify what I mean by my criticism of the status quo approach.

On the president's recent trip to Europe, ending in Turkey and in a stopover in Iraq, he was very well received everywhere he went, which certainly boosted our standing in the world. Otherwise, the trip had meager results. In particular, Obama failed to persuade our European allies to send more than a token supplement to their contribution to the military forces in Afghanistan. And there was another reason it was less successful than it might have been. Rahm Emanuel has said that you never want a serious crisis to go to waste. On this trip, the president did in fact allow a serious crisis to go to waste. The trip coincided with an upsurge in Somali

piracy which led afterward to the dramatic liberation of an American merchant ship captain who was being held for ransom. The piracy issue presented a golden opportunity to assert American leadership in a way that would have been consistent with Obama's agenda. Suppose, in one of his speeches, he had said that because piracy is a global threat to the freedom of the seas on which all nations depend, it requires a global response. Suppose he then announced that the U.S. would seek a Security Council resolution authorizing creation of a maritime coalition for freedom of the seas, spearheaded by NATO naval units, joined by similar units from China, Japan, Russia, and others, to set up a convoy system for commercial shipping and to study the possibility of taking control of Somali ports and fishing areas. The maritime states would fund the operation with money they would otherwise have to pay in ransom. The U.S. would have to make only minimal military and economic commitments and by calling for it we would display multi-lateral global leadership.

Why was the opportunity missed? Because, I am sorry to say, the president has been so focused on avoiding involvement in international crises that he is often left only with the alternative of hand-waving and speechmaking.

That is an example of what something he might have done but didn't. Let me also cite an example of what he promised to do but hasn't done. During the campaign Obama promised to take "strong action" – those were his words -- to stop the killings in Darfur, which come about as close to genocide as you can find. Samantha Power, who has written a prize-winning book calling for action against genocide, has the exalted title of Director for Multilateral Affairs in the president's National Security Council. The government of Sudan is allowing the Janjaweed militia to commit atrocities without let or hindrance – so much so that for the first time in history

a ruler of a sovereign state has been indicted for war crimes by a new international criminal tribunal. We now have a president who is in part of African extraction and who has pledged to pay more attention to that continent's hardships; but he has given no hint that the United States is either thinking of intervening directly or organizing some multi-lateral effort to force the regime to allow the aid workers to stay. In the same continent, in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, the latest in a sorry line of African kleptocrats, presides over a country ravaged by violence, worsening hunger, runaway inflation, and preventable disease, and the United States is taking no initiative whatever to promote his removal. Maybe Samantha Power should change her name to Samantha Soft Power.

These examples fit all too well with the rest of the administration's early record in foreign policy. As a candidate, Obama promised to emphasize dialogue rather than confrontation. He has followed through on that pledge by engaging in a flurry of diplomatic activity. He sent Secretary Clinton to a NATO conference on global security which led to a joint statement reaffirming a commitment to global security. She also went to Beijing, where she had tea with the Chinese oligarchs and in effect assured them that if they don't make trouble for us by selling our treasury bonds and giving us a hard time on other of our priorities, we wouldn't bother them by complaining about their human rights violations. As she explained, quite candidly, "Our pressing on those issues can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate-change crisis and the security crisis." The other day she was in Beirut telling the Lebanese it would be nice if they voted for moderates. Obama has invited Iran to enter into unconditional talks in the hope of forming a new relationship based on mutual respect. Through Secretary Clinton, he has given the Russians a symbolic "reset button," and the two sides are to follow up by opening talks to reduce nuclear arsenals. The State Department is sending

diplomats to Syria, and lending tacit approval to the British decision to try constructive engagement with Hezbollah in Lebanon. If diplomats are allowed frequent flier mileage, at least there will be some tangible benefits; otherwise, it is hard to see much good coming out of all this transcontinental travel.

Travel costs are lower nearer to home and the President himself is taking advantage of lower jet fuel costs. He followed tradition by making his first foreign trip a visit to Ottawa where he thanked our Canadian cousins for their sacrifices in Afghanistan and reassured them that the “buy America” provision in the stimulus legislation would not affect our obligations under NAFTA; indeed the provision was carefully written to say that we would “buy American” *except* insofar as we were bound not to do so by treaties such as NAFTA and agreements as a member of the World Trade Organization. In other words, not to worry; we still want your oil and gas and I especially like your Blackberry. During the campaign, he promised angry unemployed workers that we would revise NAFTA. Now administration spokesmen say we are not going to try to revise NAFTA. He opened the door slightly to changes in our relations to Cuba. He shook hands with Chavez and stayed through a rant by Ortega. He pledged to continue to support Colombia’s war on drug traffickers and step up assistance to Mexico as it fights a life or death battle with its *narcotraficantes*, but in neither case is he pledging a new initiative. Three former Latin American presidents have us warned that the only way to win the war on drugs is to deal with the demand in the United States, and that is going to require decriminalization and probably legalization of marijuana consumption, which accounts for 70% of Mexico’s drug shipments to the U.S. In other words, in this hemisphere, no major changes.

With respect to high-profile international issues like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the President understands that he can't afford to appear to be indifferent -- so he has made it clear that he does not appear to be indifferent. He has restated the American commitment to Israel's security and to a two-state solution. He has committed \$900 million -- about a fifth of the total -- for the reconstruction of Gaza. How the aid is supposed to get there remains unclear because it has to bypass Hamas, which completely controls Gaza, and because without a formal cease fire, neither Egypt nor Israel will fully open Gaza's borders to imports or exports. Through former Senator George Mitchell, he is urging Israel not to enlarge the remaining West Bank settlements, which Netanyahu has said he will do anyhow. And in June, the President will visit both Israel and the West Bank where he will call on both sides to make gestures that could smooth the way toward -- you guessed it -- a resumption of talks. These diplomatic comings and goings and aid projects are consistent with the keynote of the President's foreign policy, which is to preserve the process of dialogue so as to prevent a deterioration that could require American intervention.

I know I must be careful not to caricature what the President is doing by seeking to promote dialogue as the way to solve the world's problems. As Churchill once said, jaw-jaw is better than war, war. These overtures represent a deliberate effort to turn away from the "my-way-or-the-highway" policies of the previous administration, which were hardly a great success. The trouble with them is that they lack teeth. They are a way of avoiding the need to develop and pursue a comprehensive strategy, perhaps in the hope that somehow the problems will solve themselves.

The Bush strategy was clear, however wrongheaded. In response to the attacks on 9/11 the last administration unveiled what came to be known as the Bush Doctrine. Its premise was

that the United States might decide to act preventively to forestall even worse attacks that would result if non-state actors like Al Qaeda gained access to weapons of mass destruction. Since by definition these actors do not have states of their own that they are anxious to protect, they cannot be deterred by being threatened with retaliation in kind. Whereas assured destruction could deter the Politburo, it cannot work against al Qaeda. Accordingly, the administration put the so-called rogue states on notice that if other means failed, we might use military force to prevent them from developing such weapons and passing them on. This Doctrine was invoked to rationalize the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and in the wake of the overthrow it was expanded to include the reconstruction of Iraq on the theory that the only way to prevent Islamist and other forms of terrorism from arising and flourishing is to promote democratization in areas where they are likely to crop up. It therefore became the long-range strategy of the Bush administration to eliminate the sources of terrorism by promoting democratization. The focus of American foreign policy became the war against Islamist terrorism. Iraq was to be a showcase for the Middle East and Afghanistan, with the help of Pakistan, was to become another democracy resistant to the disease of Islamic extremism in the form of al Qaeda and the Taliban.

The Obama administration appears to be reversing both aspects of the Bush Doctrine. Without saying so explicitly, it is stepping back from claiming a right to engage in preventive war and it is not only abandoning the phrase war on terror but is using a new euphemism for terrorism, which is now to be classified as one form of “man-made disaster.” It is also pointedly not contending that we need to foster democratization in order to achieve security at home or promote progress abroad. One of the few catchy phrases in Obama’s campaign rhetoric was the statement he borrowed -- from Bill Clinton, I believe -- that we should rely not on the example of our power but on the power of our example. Other terms now in vogue are soft power and smart

power. In other words, instead of using the blunt hard power of military force we should use the soft or smart power of diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange. Above all, we should strive to show that we are a peaceful, progressive, and humane people more interested in business and basketball than in empire building. We will not insist that other countries follow our example. That would be disrespectful. In effect we will recognize that the Chinese model of development without democratization can yield real benefits, however much the Chinese people might also benefit from accountable government and the Tibetans would prefer autonomy. We will deal with non-democratic regimes, as the President said to Iran, on the basis of mutual respect and common interest. The Obama Doctrine, you might say, is a foreign policy of kumbaya rather than confrontation.

In the same vein, Obama has pledged to end our involvement in Iraq in 18 months by withdrawing our combat forces while keeping a residual force to continue to train the Iraqi army, protect our civilian personnel, and serve as backup for the Iraqi government in case civil war should break out. That residual force of 35,000 to 50,000 is scheduled to be completely withdrawn by the end of 2011. That could prove to be an embarrassing example of what happens when you rely on the audacity of hope. If the pessimistic assessments by military and other observers are borne out, and sectarian violence and political disagreement persist and even worsen, we will have to decide whether to remain in Iraq for much longer or leave and see the country fall apart or relapse into new forms of authoritarian government. The Iraqi army does not yet have the training, the morale, or the technical and logistic capability to deal with insurgency and civil war as effectively as the U.S. can. Iraq was put together out of three distinct regions and cultures, and it is not yet clear that it will be any more successful in staying united than Yugoslavia was after it lost the dictator who forced it to remain a single political entity.

Our Iraq policy dovetails with policy elsewhere. Kim Jong Il rattles his rockets and violates agreements to suspend nuclear research and we do not suspend our involvement in a dialogue with him. When North Korea launched a three stage rocket earlier this month, violating a Security Council stricture, the President denounced it but did not call a halt to our diplomatic initiative. Former UN Ambassador John Bolton, who has been a persistent critic of what he considers appeasement of North Korea by both the Bush administration and the Obama administration, reacted with predictable scorn:

Once the missile shot was complete, the administration's answer was hand-wringing, more rhetoric, and, oh yes, the obligatory trip to the U.N. Security Council, so that it could scold the defiant DPRK. Beyond what happens in the Security Council, Mr. Obama seems to have no plan whatever.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the administration recognizes that stabilization cannot be achieved by dialogue but it is trying very hard to minimize direct involvement. Obama has said that while we do need to increase force levels in Afghanistan, the best strategy there is a modified version of what was done in Iraq under General Petraeus. In other words, we will adopt a decentralizing strategy, accepting the tribal structure of the country as a reality and working with the tribal leaders, allowing them to maintain order in their areas. As in Iraq, the military will locate itself and remain in hundreds of villages, so as to enable them to improve living conditions. At the same time, we will strengthen the capacity of the central government to maintain civil functions in the capital, Kabul, and to build ministries that will eventually become national in more than name. In the province of Herat, on the Iranian border, the tribal leader Ismail Khan was deposed and given a cabinet job in Kabul and the result is that conditions there

deteriorated. To the east, an old warlord with a reputation for toughness and total corruption has been made governor of Nanjarhar, and things there are improving.

Apparently, then, the administration will accept the hard realities of Afghanistan – topographical, economic, and cultural -- and not suppose it can be transformed by greatly increasing our military commitment or by counting on the imminent emergence of a strong central government. We will try to put pressure on Karzai to moderate the rampant corruption that has embittered people toward the new government. We will redefine the problem in Afghanistan to be one that emphasizes political accommodation and economic reconstruction rather than war-fighting. We will give up or defer any attempt to help Afghanistan make a transition to democracy. We will deplore the pressure to prevent women from going to schools and abandoning the burqa, but we will not try to impose democratic values. We will not try to crack down seriously on the opium industry because we cannot offer the Afghans an appealing alternative. And we will try to persuade those elements of the Taliban that are open to persuasion that we are prepared to allow for a kind of pluralistic traditionalism in the country, though what that is supposed to mean for the human rights of women, I cannot imagine. In plain English, the Obama administration is not going to try for victory or democratization in Afghanistan but simply to keep the lid on so as to focus on defeating or at least containing the threat from al Qaeda.

Pakistan poses an equally hard problem for this administration's approach. We are maintaining our support of the existing government and are providing the Pakistani military with a subsidy of a billion dollars a year, in the expectation that they will shore up the political regime and contain the Islamist threat. The administration is asking Congress to provide an additional

\$7.5. billion in economic aid over five years. Meanwhile, we are using unmanned drone aircraft to attack Taliban sanctuaries with the tacit approval of the Pakistani government. We cannot hope to defeat the insurgents this way, but the aim is to hold them at bay and keep anybody but the Islamists in power, while we mend fences and use economic assistance to win friends among the warlords and influence the villagers in Afghanistan.

The trouble with this policy in Pakistan is becoming more and more obvious every day. The Pakistani government, taking a leaf out of Obama's book, is negotiating with the Taliban on the basis of mutual respect. As a result, the Taliban is flogging women in the province of Swat and took over a provincial district just 70 miles from the capital of Islamabad (from which the Pakistan military has now partly expelled them). Fear grows that because the army lacks the will and ability to fight, and because there is a sharp split between two secular parties, the government will fall and an Islamist coalition will come to power, gaining control over a nuclear arsenal of some 60 bombs. Our special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, is reported to be sending Secretary Clinton several memos a day briefing her on the growing danger. There is every reason to doubt that the status quo can last much longer.

Along with Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran is another serious problem for us and another illustration of the administration's reliance on diplomacy unsupported by other means. And it is an especially worrisome example. Obama has extended the hand of friendship, and in response, the Iranian regime has thumbed its nose at us. Along with its dependent, Hamas, Iran recently sent an emissary to support the dictator of Sudan after he had been designated a war criminal. At a conference supposedly on racism Iran's president made a revolting attack against Israel and repeated his denial of the Holocaust. The regime has lately convicted a journalist with dual

Iranian and American citizenship of spying and sentenced her to eight years in prison. Egypt has accused Iran of sending Hezbollah agents into the country to destabilize its government and attack Israel from the south. And all of this has happened since President Obama offered to open a dialogue of mutual respect with its theocratic regime.

The Obama administration is trying to ignore this bad behavior in order to encourage Iran to abandon its hostility to the U.S. and the West, to its Sunni neighbors, and to Israel. In particular, the administration aims to induce the Iranian regime to refrain from developing nuclear weapons. This is certainly a worthy goal and one that previous administrations have pursued by getting the Security Council to impose sanctions and acting vigorously to enforce those sanctions. Israeli leaders have said that an Iranian bomb would pose an existential threat to Israel, and the Arab states are also worried about what it would do to the regional balance of power. So far, Iran has managed to survive the sanctions, thanks in considerable measure to the unwillingness of China and the Soviet Union to tighten them to a degree where Iran would have to take them seriously. President Bush always said that all options, including the military one, would remain on the table. Spokesmen for this administration have said or implied that we are not even considering military action. Vice President Biden and Secretary Gates have warned that an Israeli strike would be altogether counterproductive; presumably the same goes for a U.S. strike. Meanwhile, the Iranians continue to develop both nuclear energy and the missile technology that would, when fully developed, allow them to employ nuclear weapons over a range of 2500 kilometers, far enough to cover most of the region. They have some thirteen known installations devoted to nuclear energy, from uranium mines to enrichment facilities to power reactors to installations for making weapons-grade uranium gas into metal and milling the

metal to form a bomb. And they have a comparable number of facilities deigned to improve their missile launching capability.

There is considerable disagreement among well-informed observers as to what progress they are making and when they might succeed in developing bombs. Iran acquired nuclear technology know-how from the Pakistani physicist-engineer A. Q. Khan, who took the blueprints from his European employer. The key U.S. agencies estimate that it will take them until sometime between 2010 and 2015, and well-qualified independent observers are skeptical of Iranian claims that they are making great progress in enriching uranium. Because Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, its known activities are monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which reports on the quantities of gas being introduced into the cascades of thousands of centrifuges Iran has installed in a large underground cavern at Natanz and the output of the centrifuges, and the results show pretty clearly that Iran is having big trouble operating this facility. So even though it is considered possible that Iran has now accumulated enough of the low-enriched isotopes of uranium known as U-235 that is necessary to create a bomb, it is still far from being able to enrich them sufficiently, and there is reason to believe that their centrifuges are not working well at all. Low enriched U-235 is a concentration at the level of 5% or below. Bomb-grade uranium must be enriched to 90%. Iran is also developing a heavy water reactor at Arak which when operational, in four or five years, could give them the opportunity to extract plutonium, the alternative to enriched uranium that was used in the Nagasaki bomb. What is not known, however, is whether Iran has built secret facilities to make bomb-grade uranium that the IAEA doesn't monitor. To complicate matters further, the Russians have built a light-water civil power reactor at Bushehr for which they supply the fuel and from which they remove the spent fuel rods. It is to go on line soon. If the Iranians were to

take control of these rods, they could process the uranium oxide in them to produce weapons grade material with one-fifth the effort to enriching natural uranium.

What does the Obama administration hope to gain by engaging the Iranians in dialogue? Obviously we will first seek a full suspension of enrichment and plutonium production. But because we have taken the military option off the table, the administration will have to be ready to put forward a fall-back proposal backed by the threat of much stiffer sanctions. If the sanctions are credible, this approach might work. I have been thinking about what the terms would be and for now, this is what I think they will involve.

The U.S. would offer a complete lifting of sanctions, resumption of full diplomatic relations, and a pledge not to seek regime change.

In exchange, Iran would agree to forego development of nuclear weapons and allow verification by IAEA inspections of all nuclear facilities, including the right to make unannounced visits anywhere and to interview all scientists.

Under this agreement Iran would be entitled to continue to enrich uranium. It would forego the right to produce plutonium. It would be allowed to continue work on ballistic missiles. But it would agree not to use the enriched uranium to fabricate a bomb. In other words Iran would be able to continue its current program to a point at which it would become a “nuclear-capable” or “near-nuclear power.” It would be in a position to abrogate the agreement and develop bombs within a matter of months.

Iran would be warned that if it should abrogate the agreement, the U.S. would reserve the right to use military force against this program or assist a strike by Israel.

Why might the Iranians agree to this proposal? Because it would give them a lot of what they want at little if any cost. The U.S. would point out to them that if they go nuclear, Saudi Arabia and Egypt would feel great pressure to acquire nukes from Pakistan or build their own, thus defeating any power advantage Iran might develop in the Gulf, sparking a costly and dangerous general arms race, and destabilizing the region. Any conflict could escalate and attacks or accidents could cause untold havoc, especially if the Bushehr reactor were to be bombed (and the resulting fallout kill hundreds of thousands).

The U.S. will surely also argue that if Iran does not agree and crosses the bomb threshold by continuing to enrich uranium, Israel could not be restrained by the U.S. from launching a unilateral and devastating preventive attack. Iran could not deter an attack from Israel by unleashing Hezbollah because Israel would launch an equally devastating attack against the whole of Lebanon, destroying Iran's effort to create a Shiite-dominated ally there and angering the Arabs (just as the attack by Hamas against Israel was blamed by the Arabs on Iran). Iran knows that Israel has some defensive capacity to shield against missile attacks and that Israel could mount a truly devastating counterstrike because it may have as many as 200 large-size nuclear weapons and operational ballistic missiles. Finally, the U.S. would point out that by agreeing, Iran would not lose face because it has always maintained that as a signatory to the NPT it wants only to develop civil nuclear power, not nuclear weapons.

As a final persuader, the U.S. would also warn Iran that if it should reject this deal, sanctions would be tightened because the U.S. is improving relations with the Russians and the Europeans are ready to take sanctions further, if necessary to the point of suspending shipments

of refined oil. Since Iran is suffering economically from existing sanctions and from the global economic recession, this could well be the “teeth” needed to make the deal acceptable.

If the U.S. can induce Iran to take this offer, we would seek to persuade Israel (and the Gulf states) to go along with it by offering extended deterrence to all our Middle East allies (as in the case of Western Europe during the Cold War), meaning that any attack by Iran or its proxies against these allies would be treated as an attack against the U.S. The U.S. would also provide defensive systems and boost offensive retaliatory capacities as a deterrent. It would agree to station sea-based and airborne interceptors designed to attack ballistic missiles in boost phase. It would point out to Israel that even a successful attack would give a few years relief at most and make Iran determined to develop nuclear weapons, just as happened in Iraq after the Osirak attack. Furthermore, Iran could retaliate by using other (chemical or biological) WMD. Hezbollah would rocket Tel Aviv even though it would be a suicidal attack. Iran would interfere with oil shipments, launch terrorist attacks world-wide, impede US efforts to withdraw from Iraq and stabilize Pakistan and Afghanistan. Worst of all, Iranians and other Muslims would commit to Israel’s destruction for generations to come. In other words, the long-term ramifications would greatly outweigh short-term benefits.

This negotiation does have a chance of succeeding because all the parties have an interest in seeing some sort of resolution to a looming crisis that holds uncertain dangers for all of them. The Obama administration is anxious for a deal because we want Iran’s acquiescence in our pullout from Iraq and their help in Afghanistan. For their part, the mullahs may agree to a deal because there is growing disillusionment among the poor with the regime and because they may decide that the risks of rejecting it are too great.

But suppose the Iranians call our bluff by refusing to accept any limitations on their program? Will the administration succeed in tightening sanctions to persuade Iran to change course even if without the threat of a military attack? The success of American policy hinges more than any other single factor on the willingness of the Russian leadership to agree to such an outcome. The Russians have lately signaled that they would support such a deal by stating that the Iranian nuclear program is a peaceful one. This is probably their way of giving the Iranians cover for agreeing to such a proposal. They have also delayed shipping to Iran an advanced air defense system which they have sold to Iran and which could complicate an Israeli attack. Deployment of this system could lead Israel to attack now rather before it is fully operational. I certainly hope that the administration's effort will succeed because the alternative is terrible to contemplate. But the important point to bear in mind is that negotiations cannot succeed unless they are supported by the will and ability to tighten sanctions and if necessary to use military force or to allow Israel to do so. That is again why I said at the outset that what is troubling about the administration's approach to foreign policy is that it seems to concentrate entirely on dialogue and diplomacy without the reinforcement they need to be effective

The evidence is pretty strong, then, that in foreign policy the aim of this administration is to follow Jefferson's admonition to avoid foreign entanglements even more than Jefferson did. There are several reasons why this is happening. One is that the administration believes that the neo-Conservative activism of the preceding administration was a disaster. Another is that we simply do not have the means to back up a more aggressive foreign policy. Our military forces were overstretched in Iraq, and the administration is anxious to constrain the military budget even as it wrestles with the Joint Chiefs over their list of expensive new war fighting equipment. A third reason is that since we have not suffered any direct attacks since 9/11, there is a feeling

that the threat from al Qaeda and its affiliates has been overblown, and that we should stop talking about a war on terror, which only makes Muslims think we suppose they are all terrorists.

This interpretation is based not just on intuition or on reading the non-governmental reports but also on the administration's proposed defense budget. Liberal commentators have praised the budget for honesty because it including expenditures in Iraq directly in the defense budget rather than hiding them as supplemental "emergency" appropriations. But conservative commentators have been quick to point out that by doing so the administration can claim to be increasing the defense budget whereas the total budget will decline drastically – to a point where we will spend only 3% of GDP in the baseline defense budget, about half of what we spent during the Cold War. In 2009 the Bush administration's baseline budget was \$513 billion, and due to rise to \$523 billion in 2010. The Obama budget calls for \$533 billion in 2010, which seems like an increase, but this budget includes much less for war costs than Bush did by additions. Overall, the share of the defense budget in federal spending is slated to fall from 20% in 2008 to 14% in 2012. That suggests strongly that the administration is not planning to scale up our military involvement in Afghanistan to anything like the level reached in Iraq.

In effect, then, the administration has turned its back on the thesis adopted during the Bush administration, to the effect that the only way to defeat terrorism in the long term is to spread democracy, especially in the Muslim world. This administration is much less neo-Wilsonian and more neo-realist, i.e., it takes the world as it is rather than as it should be, and is much less concerned about remaking it in our image. That means we will be mainly concerned with achieving stability, rather in the way we were during most of the Cold War when we chose containment over rollback. In this post-Cold War world, it means accepting tribalism and

sectarianism, partnering with authoritarian regimes like those of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China, and hoping we can live with nuclear proliferation. But the administration is not so neo-realist as to be willing to make warfare, in Clausewitz's famous formulation, the extension of policy by other means. For the reasons I have tried to suggest here, this policy represents a major gamble that may well have to be revised in the face of developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan and with respect to Iran.

In an increasingly interdependent world in which weapons of mass destruction are readily available, even to otherwise weak states and rulers suffering delusions of grandeur, a foreign policy which rules out the use of serious economic sanctions and the ultimate sanction of force under virtually any circumstance is extremely dangerous, because it encourages aggressive behavior. In the absence of any standard of moral conduct in international relations, and of organizational mechanisms for promoting collective security, the world will not tend toward an equilibrium based on a balance of forces, as though it were a natural system guided by the laws of physics or biology. Anarchy on any scale, whether in a neighborhood, a nation, or a world of nation-states, invites a lawless resort to violence that can embolden aggressors and make onlookers indifferent to the suffering of victims. Under modern conditions, when there is so much interdependence, there is a real and present danger that the aggression by even a distant regional actor can affect the vital interests of other states. And there is a clear need for principles and methods to impose sanctions on regimes which are grossly oppressive to their own subjects. President Obama is certainly mindful of the need of a great power like the United States to avoid the kind of arrogant behavior that has created so much ill-will against us. But good will alone will not be enough. I therefore believe that the administration will be well advised to rethink the premises of the foreign policy it has adopted in its first hundred days.

