



Team Foreign Policy

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Getting direct answers out of politicians is never easy, let alone from those who run for the presidency of the United States. Consequently, one has to use their best judgment when deciding who to vote for. This is accomplished by listening to what the candidates say, or have said, and reviewing each one's voting record. As the 2008 campaign for the White House nears its end, though, an economic crisis has posed a threat not seen since the 1930s, one that generates an ominous financial and social situation for the future. From a historical perspective, the Great Depression is widely considered to be the root cause of World War II. Granted, the circumstances are different, but poverty and distress is known to propagate extremism. Although the aforementioned predicament has dominated the newsprint and airwaves, one must also give thought to the foreign policies of John McCain (R) and Barack Obama (D) in the event that this possible future becomes a reality.

The foreign policy of a country, in this case the United States, is a set of prioritized goals, national interests, and plans of action that a president sets forth to solve potential problems that involve entities outside of the state. The focus of this paper is to understand the conviction of each candidate in regard to the use of military force and provide the electorate with an adequate amount of information to make a conscious decision. The candidates' views on counter-terrorist operations, weapons of mass destruction, security alliances, access to strategic resources, human rights, and humanitarian aid are crucial in determining what they deem appropriate for troop deployment.

The dilemma created by international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are not unique to the twenty first century, but have become top priorities since the attacks of 9/11. In order to effectively combat Al-Qaeda, McCain believes that the world needs a stable Iraq, a goal that requires the continued presence of the United States. He also promotes an increase of on-the-ground intelligence in Afghanistan and Pakistan through the recruitment of qualified individuals who can blend into the various cultures and terror organizations. Obama, on the other hand, wants to get in tune with the Islamic world by no longer ignoring and vilifying the Middle East. This tactic is intended to accurately determine threats. Additionally, he feels that the U.S. should reduce its focus on Iraq and concentrate its forces on the mountainous area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, both candidates do not rule out a military strike, with McCain supporting the Bush doctrine of preemptive war, if a threat is

anticipated, while Obama would act on actionable intelligence, presumably gathered through his diplomatic approach. As for the threat posed by WMDs, the Republican senator has identified Iran, Syria, and North Korea as the most prominent perpetrators, calling for an alliance among America, Russia, Europe, and China to deter these rogue states. Also, during his 2000 presidential bid, McCain proposed a “rogue state” rollback, a plan that would arm, train and equip factions within or without such a state in an attempt to oust a capricious government. This could be applied or modified to suit a nation in question. The Democratic senator meanwhile, is willing to have unconditional meetings with the leaders of nations like Iran and North Korea, offering economic incentives (WTO membership) and security if they reduce and dismantle their nuclear programs. Based on his voting record, he will most likely negotiate a global ban on WMDs as he opposed their continued development. Again, both do not dismiss military action if intelligence points towards an imminent threat.

The attitudes of each candidate on security alliances are similar, but the purposes they believe they should serve differ. They promote the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to include states like Ukraine, Georgia, and any others willing to contribute their efforts to the organization. As a result, this can create a scenario in which the United States and the rest of NATO will have to help defend a member-state if they become entangled in a war. Nonetheless, John McCain believes that NATO should continue to help train soldiers in Iraq to ensure its stability in addition to the creation of an alliance, mentioned in the previous paragraph, he refers to as a “League of Democracies”. This group of states is intended to deter those with and those pursuing WMDs. He also recognizes Israel as an ally, but unlike his counterpart, does not question its settlements. Senator Obama, on the other hand, views Israel as an ally but does not rule out an Israeli and Palestinian occupation of present day Israel in order to develop a peaceful existence between the two. As for NATO, he would like them, along with the U.S., to gradually pull out of Iraq and use the coalition to combat terrorists in the Afghan-Pakistani border region.

The continued access to strategic resources is not definitive at all; both candidates simply mention their plans to become energy independent through an increase in fuel efficiency standards and a reinvigoration of American auto companies. These plans will work in conjunction with domestic oil and natural gas production until this independence is met. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the presidential hopefuls are willing to endorse sanctions on unfavorable oil producing nations, namely Iran, a possible indication that the halt of their nuclear ambitions override the need of certain resources. Additionally, McCain has cited the notion that some of the money spent on oil is funneled into the development of terror organizations and the pursuit of nuclear weaponry, making it another reason to become less dependent on foreign sources. Based on the given information, it is unclear as to what measures they are willing to make to ensure that the U.S.’ need of resources is met.

Lastly, are the positions each man holds on humanitarian aid and human rights. The Republican nominee is a bit vague in describing the measures he will take to offer foreign aid to

those in need. For example, he has stated that aid, whether it is monetary or military, should be granted to those under extraordinary hardships that endanger civilian lives and cause disaster. Darfur and the AIDS epidemic should come to mind, especially since the Arizona senator called for an American intervention, the materialized too late, for the genocide in Rwanda during the 1990s. McCain would be more likely to support a nation in a Georgia-type situation, which had been essentially invaded by Russia during the past summer, as he also believes that aid should be granted to countries whose predicaments concern America's security interests. However, one also must keep in mind the economy because it will surely play a role in dictating what the presidential hopefuls can and cannot do in terms of monetary and military support. In spite of this, though, the Democratic nominee has a much more ambitious approach than McCain, but has also admitted that he may have to scale back on it. He has outlined a plan to combat world poverty and hunger, which is marked by the doubling of annual investments in foreign aid, primarily through the establishment of the Add Value to Agriculture Initiative which would assist small and medium sized farming enterprises through. Obama would also like to increase the funding for the global fight against AIDS by the billions of dollars. As for the atrocities in Darfur, he has stated that he would like to place international pressure on the Sudanese people and Khartoum government to end the genocide. Also, to ensure that Sudan stays on course, he wants to establish an international peace-keeping force, most likely through a joint effort that includes the African Union and an expanded NATO.

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that Barack Obama and John McCain would do his best to ensure the prosperity of America when either of them is elected. In an ideal world, there would be an infinite amount of military personnel and resources to satisfy and allow the rest of the world to prosper. Unfortunately, it does not work that way. Instead, they have to set a list of priorities and plans of action that they feel are of the most importance. Naturally, they can sometimes feel different about certain things relative to the electorate. Therefore, voters must make compromises and decide which candidate best suits their own convictions.