



M.A. PROGRAM IN AMERICAN STUDIES

ACADEMIC YEAR 2008 - 2009

**WORDS YOU CAN BELIEVE IN.  
THE FIRST SIX MONTHS  
OF OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY.**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION.

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The original plan of this thesis, was to compare the first hundred days of Obama's policy with his campaign promises. Pretty quickly I learned that his campaign promises alone, are hundreds of pages long, and can be read in several versions. On his website, there are excellent, well-considered one-liners. If you want more information and scroll down, the website provides a few sentences of explanation, following the same structure: first the problem, then Obama's solution, then McCain's solution, and why that's not a good idea. If you dig a little deeper, you can also find comparisons with Hillary Clinton and other Democrats, made during the primaries. For the freaks, Obama's website has fact sheets, 5 to 15 pages on lots of topics, from the care of Veterans, of the Reform of Homeland Security to the future American policy in the Caribbean. If you leave the campaign website, there are also hundreds of speeches, in video or transcript, out there on the world wide web.

Besides his campaign website, Obama has also written a few books. And he proposed bills as a Senator. And he appointed hundreds of people, who also appointed people. That long list, were just the primary sources. Tv, radio, newspapers, magazines, blogs, political scientific stories and columns multiply all these sources. He appeared in tons of magazines, hundreds of times he got his picture of the cover, usually with a multiple page story. Time magazine alone, put his picture on the cover 14 of the 52 weeks in 2008, or 27% of its covers. His name appeared on 25 Time-covers, almost 50%. Time also made him Person of the Year.<sup>1</sup> Newsweek put him on 12 covers.<sup>2</sup>

So I had to restrict myself. The focus is on Obama. Not on Hillary Clinton, McCain, Robert Gates, George Mitchell, Richard Holbrooke, David Petraeus, Stan McChrystal; this thesis only deals with Obama.

Foreign policy is my main interest, and my curiosity goes out to Great Persons and their ideologies. If you read lots of material, you see the same things coming back. Obama presented a comprehensive approach, were each topic filled the gaps and reported back to the previous and the next. The hundred-days-limit provided a lot of information, but I wrote this thesis in July and August, so it would have been stupid to let the next hundred days out. (August 17, 2009 is Obama's 210<sup>th</sup> day in office, he has 1251 left)

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<sup>1</sup> MONTANARO, D., *Obama appeared on half of Time Covers*. MSNBC, Published 17/12/2008.

<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2008/12/17/1719779.aspx> Consulted 21/07/2009.

<sup>2</sup> for a entire list check APPLEMAN, E., *Obama on the Cover*. George Washington University, last updated 11/03/2009. [www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/media08/covers2008obama.doc](http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/media08/covers2008obama.doc) Consulted 21/07/2009.

In the first hundred days, in political science often called the honeymoon period, Obama translated much of campaign promises to government strategy. After that hundredth day, April 29, 2009, things started being translated into practice: the speech in Cairo, Iran's elections, the surge in Afghanistan, Pakistan's pressure on the SWAT-valley, the Russian talks on Non Proliferation, the G8-summit in L'Aquila, etc.

Even though it is still the dawn of his first term and Hillary Clinton has only visited 100 countries or so, we begin to see the comprehensive vision of this administration.

## 2. HYPOTHESIS.

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Obama's foreign policy so far, has mainly been consistent with his campaign promises. Three aspects of foreign policy philosophy are important, before and after the election, and that's why they are the four research questions of this thesis:

- The first hundred days focussed on changing 'the tone, the atmosphere, the discourse'. That is a vital part of his diplomacy. Diplomacy is omnipresent, in all his proposals. Diplomacy and a change of tone were definitely a necessity, after 8 years of George W. Bush. But is that enough? And what has it been in practice? Can we speak of a new diplomacy, if it's only coming from one side, or is it just a change of the American tone?

- There's no real change. At least not on Obama's selection of staff. Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, George Mitchell and Christopher Hill, the new ambassador in Iraq, are very experienced foreign policy officials. Can this experienced bunch change and/or bring change?

- He put out five main goals during the campaign. What are they and did he treat all of them equally during his first few months?

The last question is the one that provided the structure of this paper: the five main goals of Obama's foreign policy get most attention in this thesis. That means no development aid, no focus on individual countries, even though in practice those are very important parts of the policy. But in order to make a comparison, we need to focus on the same issues headlining the campaign.

The three other research questions, are being answered after every chapter in short partial conclusions. The next five chapters of this thesis deal with the actual content and choices of Obama's foreign policy. First comes a summary of his campaign promises, followed by his actual deeds, and answers to our four research questions.

We start with a chapter on his philosophy on foreign policy, his worldview and how he tried to sell that during the campaign. The five other chapters are Obama's campaign priorities:

- “ - a responsible ending of the war in Iraq,
- completing the war against Al Qaeda and global terrorism,
- modernising the army for the 21<sup>st</sup> century,
- a nuclear free world, and
- the renewal of American diplomacy ”<sup>3</sup>

On the website of the White House<sup>4</sup>, not all these issues have been taken in the 'progress'-division. Iraq, Afghanistan and nuclear proliferation are, but that's it. This thesis will try to figure out what's going on, and why the emphasis possibly shifted.

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<sup>3</sup> OBAMA FOR AMERICA, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*. Three Rivers Press, New York, 2008, 273 p.

### 3. OBAMA'S GENERAL APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY TOWARDS FOREIGN POLICY.

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Obama studied International Affairs in Columbia during the Reagan years, and you can tell if he presents his ideas. He often starts his speeches with historical examples and gives an overview of 200 years of American foreign policy. A good example is the 35 page chapter in his book “The Audacity of Hope.”<sup>5</sup> Obama’s philosophy of foreign policy is well explained and carefully constructed. He links his memories and the development work of his mom (giving microloans) with the Cold War politics of his heroes Truman, Kennan, Acheson and Marshall. He recognises the unfortunate consequences of their policies: supporting or tolerating dictators, a growing economic inequality, between states, but also between individuals, etc. He recounts the Reagan years as irresponsible, dangerous, overaggressive. He also discussed Bush Sr. and Jr., but that will come up later in this thesis.

He has written the book between 2004 and 2006 and it was published in 2006. The title of that book is the same of the speech that made him famous, addressing the Democratic National Convention in 2004<sup>6</sup>. The book has 9 chapters with general ideas, autobiographical facts and emotional stories.

I think the book is representative and his views are truly his, and not just well-researched, polled, election material. When he was elected into the US Senate, he promised to serve his six-year-term entirely, thinking that he might run for president or first vice-president in 8 or 12 years. His popularity and much of the media-attention came during his book-tour. He got famous and appeared on the covers of Time magazine<sup>7</sup> (October 2006) and in 2007 on several others like GQ, Men’s Vogue, Harper’s, Ebony, The New Republic, Vanity Fair, etc<sup>8</sup>.

The book caused the early run for President, not the other way around<sup>9</sup>.

His first major speech<sup>10</sup> on foreign policy was delivered 2 months after his announcement to run for president, on April 23th, 2007 to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. There, his five topics were:

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<sup>4</sup> WHITEHOUSE, *Foreign Policy Issues*, [http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/)

<sup>5</sup> OBAMA, B., *The Audacity of Hope. Thoughts on reclaiming the American Dream*. Crown Publishers, New York, 2006, 360p.

<sup>6</sup> OBAMA, B., *Transcript: Illinois Senate Candidate Barack Obama*. Washington, The Washington Post, Published 27/07/2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19751-2004Jul27.html> Consulted 01/08/2009.

<sup>7</sup> For a picture of the cover on 23/10/2006 see <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20061023,00.html>

<sup>8</sup> For a entire list check APPLEMAN, E., *Obama on the Cover*. George Washington University, last updated 11/03/2009. [www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/media08/covers2008obama.doc](http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/media08/covers2008obama.doc) Consulted 01/08/2009.

<sup>9</sup> BALZ, D., *Obama Says He'll Consider A 2008 Bid for The Presidency*. Washington, The Washington Post, Published 23/10/2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/22/AR2006102200220.html> Consulted 10/07/2009.

<sup>10</sup> OBAMA, B., *Remarks*. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Transcript, Published 23/04/2007. [http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/dynamic\\_page.php?id=64](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/dynamic_page.php?id=64) Consulted 10/07/2009.



- bringing a responsible end to the war in Iraq and refocusing on the entire region
- building the first truly 21<sup>st</sup> century military and showing wisdom in how we deploy it
- marshalling a global effort to secure, destroy and stop the spread of WMD
- rebuild the alliances and partnerships necessary to meet common challenges and confront common threats
- invest in our common humanity through foreign aid and supporting the pillars of a sustainable democracy: a strong legislature, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, a vibrant civil society, a free press, and an honest police force.

Later on, on his campaign website, he added energy security as a foreign policy goal. During the campaign, he decided to split the first goal: Iraq became a separate subject, although he always tried to link it to the entire region. Afghanistan, Pakistan and global terrorism were sometimes put together, and sometimes separated.

I chose not to include energy security, because it is a fairly detailed, operational topic, and Obama has usually approached it from a domestic and/or economic perspective. Of course it can be also considered a defense or foreign policy theme. Obama does approach it from different perspectives in his more lengthy speeches, but the five selected topics are broader and got more attention during the campaign.

By July 15, 2008, after it was clear that Hillary couldn't convince superdelegates to vote for her, he had secured his nomination. In a 36 minute speech<sup>11</sup>, day on day 61 years after George Marshall announced his Marshallplan, Obama expressed his admiration for the combination of realist and idealist politics of President Truman, Dean Acheson, George Kennan and also George H.W. Bush. A proof that he's a typical International Relations scholar.

It wasn't the first time he praised those people. That admiration had also been present in his book 'The Audacity of Hope'. In an exclusive preview of the speech on CNN, an interview with Fareed Zakaria, he said: "One of the things that I want to do, if I have the honor of being president, is to try to bring back the kind of foreign policy that characterized the Truman administration with Marshall and Acheson and Kennan, but also characterized, to a large degree, the first President Bush with people like Scowcroft and Powell and Baker, who I think had a fairly clear- eyed view of how the world works and recognized that it is always in our interests to engage, to listen, to build alliances, to understand what our interests are, and to be fierce in protecting those interests"<sup>12</sup>. Zakaria analysed his

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<sup>11</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>12</sup> ZAKARIA, F., *Obama's Foreign Policy Examined*. CNN, Transcript, Aired 28/12/2008. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/28/fzgps.01.html> Consulted 03/07/2009.

interview a few months later, after Obama had won the elections, and says about the interview: “Many of wondered whether Obama was being honest about his respect for George H. W. Bush's diplomacy. But consider his appointments: James Jones as national security adviser, Robert Gates as secretary of Defense. Obama's diplomacy may end up resembling Bush Sr.'s much more than Bush Jr.'s ever did.”<sup>13</sup>

In that July 15 speech, titled, ‘A new Strategy for a new World’, he repeated the 3 essential questions from Marshall, that he likes to use to solve a problem: “What is needed? What can best be done? What must be done?”<sup>14</sup>

His main critique of Bush Jr.’s diplomacy, his main concern is clearly presented in the title of his campaign plan: “Rebuilding America’s Leadership. Recovery of our position in the world.” In ‘The Audacity of Hope’<sup>15</sup>, he makes the same point: 9/11 changed everything. The whole world was on America’s side, even Iran offered to help, Article 5 of the NATO Treaty was put in motion and the invasion of Afghanistan was a good start. “So I waited together with the rest of the world of what I thought would happen next: the declaration of America’s foreign policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But it didn’t come”<sup>16</sup>. So Obama criticises Bush for not having a coherent vision, a plan. The Bush doctrine wasn’t good enough, especially compared to his great example, the Truman doctrine. Let’s see if Obama has developed a doctrine in his first 100, or 200 days.

This philosophy is now also present in the discourse of his speeches and documents. Two examples:

- The White House website states that “President Obama has committed himself and his Administration from the beginning of his presidency to a foreign policy that ensures the safety of the American people. But he also refuses the false division between our values and our security.”<sup>17</sup>
- The White House website also stresses, that “all elements of American power (...) should be used in an integrated and balanced fashion.”<sup>18</sup> That means military, diplomatic, economic, legal and intelligence power.

That’s a very good approach and a big difference compared to the Bush administration. But that’s just discourse. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Let’s take a look at his five priorities.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>15</sup> OBAMA, B., *The Audacity of Hope. Thoughts on reclaiming the American Dream*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2006, pp. 277-282.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>17</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Foreign Policy Issues*, [http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/) Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>18</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/> Consulted 15/08/2009.

## 4. ENDING THE WAR IN IRAQ.

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*Let me be clear: we must be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in.*<sup>19</sup>

*Barack Obama, Washington DC, July 15, 2008*

### 4.1. CAMPAIGN PROMISES.

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Obama has always opposed the war in Iraq, since early 2002.<sup>20</sup> That consistent position was a major advantage during the primaries, since none of the other serious Democratic presidential candidates had opposed it. Dennis Kucinich never really made a chance. It gave him the credibility necessary to satisfy the most liberal side of the Democratic Party. Plus it convinced a lot of young people, and it could be summarized in one sentence: “A new black guy that opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning”. As a senator, he already had a plan to bring most of the troops home by March 2008.<sup>21</sup>

Obama agreed that Saddam had to be removed, but he didn't see it as an immediate threat and believed that going to Iraq would spoil the momentum of worldwide support after 9/11, anger muslims all around the world and even radicalise more people, turning a fraction of them into terrorists. As it turned out, Iraq wasn't just potentially turning future generations into terrorist, it also attracted terrorist from all over the world, immediately. From the neighbouring countries, from the entire Arab world, European muslims, even Americans. By example; the first female suicide bomber was a Belgian woman.<sup>22</sup>

His opposition against the war in Iraq gave him an advantage during the Democratic primaries, but would it help him win the elections from John McCain? With President Bush reaching historically low numbers of approval, and a majority of the country thinking that “the country was on the wrong track”,<sup>23</sup> you would think so. But how to convince Republican voters to vote for Obama, and how to win the independents? By saying that McCain would just continue Bush's policy of course. Obama

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<sup>19</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>20</sup> OBAMA, B., *Remarks of Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama against going to war with Iraq*. Speech (Video) and transcript, Published 02/10/2002. [http://www.barackobama.com/2002/10/02/remarks\\_of\\_illinois\\_state\\_sen.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2002/10/02/remarks_of_illinois_state_sen.php) Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>21</sup> OBAMA, B., *Barack Obama's speech announcing his run for the Democratic Nomination*. CBS News, Speech (video) and transcript, Published 10/02/2007. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/02/10/politics/main2458099.shtml> Consulted 14/07/2009.

<sup>22</sup> WATT, N., *From Belgian cul-de-sac to suicide bomber in Iraq*. The Guardian, Published 2/12/2005. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/dec/02/iraq.islam> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>23</sup> RAUM, T., *Most say US on wrong track: AP- Ipsos poll*. Washington, The Huffington Post, Published 19/06/2008. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/06/19/most-say-us-on-wrong-trac\\_n\\_108138.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/06/19/most-say-us-on-wrong-trac_n_108138.html) Consulted 14/07/2009.

said McCain only wanted to change tactics in Iraq<sup>24</sup>, while he wants a new strategy. And “George Bush and John McCain don't have a strategy for success in Iraq - they have a strategy for staying in Iraq.”<sup>25</sup> In 2007, before the primaries, Obama said: “By refusing to end the war in Iraq, President Bush is giving the terrorists what they really want, and what the Congress voted to give them in 2002: a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences.”<sup>26</sup>

If we go beyond the oneliners, Obama's analysis of the Iraqi situation, had four main focus points<sup>27</sup>:

- inadequate progress,
- strains on the military,
- resurgent Al Qaeda in Afghanistan,
- a lack of vision.

Two of those concerns are the same issues of his general foreign policy, being Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and strains on the military. Since they are two of his five priorities, they have their own chapters in this thesis. (chapter 5: The fight against global terrorism and chapter 6: Building an army for the 21<sup>st</sup> century). Another example of how interconnected and comprehensive his approach is.

What does he mean with lack of vision? We've already seen that Obama puts McCain in Bush's position, but what does he have to say about McCain's vision on Iraq? Obama believes that after a lot of trial and error, the US has managed to contain the violence, but not to change Iraqi lives, to let Iraqis take responsibility for their own country, and end this 6 year, 3 trillion dollar war. And he thinks that progress can only be made by the Iraqi government. The goal must be reached in a political way, and it must not be reached by Americans, but by Iraqis. The military option didn't work. “The Iraq war has lasted longer than World War I, World War II, and the Civil War. More than 4,000 Americans have died. More than 60,000 have been injured and wounded.”<sup>28</sup> “At some point, a judgement must be made. Iraq is not going to be a perfect place, and we don't have unlimited resources to try to make it one. We are not going to kill every al Qaeda sympathizer, eliminate every trace of Iranian influence, or stand up a flawless democracy before we leave.”<sup>29</sup> But that is not surrender, according to Obama. He

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<sup>24</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*, speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> OBAMA, B., *Campaign website*, [http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index\\_campaign.php](http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index_campaign.php) and OBAMA FOR AMERICA, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2008, p. 109.

<sup>28</sup> OBAMA, B., *Campaign website*, [http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index\\_campaign.php](http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index_campaign.php) Consulted 01/08/2009.

<sup>29</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

calls it the end of a failed policy. Success has to come from the Iraqi people and government themselves. The US can not import success.

An advocate of the devil could say that the strategy just seems to be: get out safely and hope that the Iraqi government will survive.

Obama often emphasized the costs of war in Iraq: costs in lives, but also financial. On March 20, 2008, the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq, he gave a speech at the University of Charleston, West-Virginia.<sup>30</sup> As usual, he started with congratulating and honouring the people in uniforms for their bravery, and continued with paying his respect to their families at home (since most of the soldiers were not at the campaign events). The cost of war was twofold. It is the cost of 4000 American lives and 60 000 injured. Of course “The costs of war are greatest for the troops and those who love them”<sup>31</sup> But in the week of Bear Stearns’ financial problems, it was also a financial issue: “the most conservative estimates say that Iraq has now cost more than half a trillion dollars, more than any other war in our history besides World War II. Some say the true cost is even higher and that by the time it’s over, this could be a \$3 trillion war.”<sup>32</sup> That’s a huge number, but it’s hard to estimate what it means, so he breaks it down: “When you’re spending over \$50 to fill up your car because the price of oil is four times what it was before Iraq, you’re paying a price for this war. ... When Iraq is costing each household about \$100 a month, you’re paying a price for this war. ... When a National Guard unit is over in Iraq and can’t help out during a hurricane in Louisiana or with floods here in West Virginia, our communities are paying a price for this war.”<sup>33</sup>

So Obama analysed the problem, what were his solutions at the time of the campaign? Lots of important, yet detailed ideas were launched by Obama. Things like more and better care for veterans with post traumatic stress disorder, ending no-bid-defense contracts, etc. This thesis only aims to present the big ideas, so I won’t go into details of those things.

The solutions for Iraq were threefold<sup>34</sup>:

- A diplomatic offensive towards Iran, Syria and other neighbouring countries and other neighbouring countries, as suggested by the ‘Iraq Study Group’, in order to agree on the borders, to reconcile different religious and sectaric groups, to prevent other countries from mingling into Iraqi affairs, and to isolate Al-Qaeda.

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<sup>30</sup> OBAMA, B., *The War in Iraq Has Burdened American Working Families*. Speech at the University of Charleston, West-Virginia, Given 20/03/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/samgrahamfelsen/gGBH8j> Consulted 04/08/2009.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> OBAMA FOR AMERICA, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*. Three Rivers Press, New York, 2008, p. 109.

- The prevention of a humanitarian crisis: The US won't leave the Iraqi people alone, even after most of the troops have retreated. The five million Iraqi refugees must be taken care of, with international help. A US civilian, development and humanitarian team will stay after the troops are gone:
- A responsible, phased withdrawal. A timetable must be set. Iraqi PM Maliki called for it<sup>35</sup> and Obama was happy to answer. He promises that on the first day of his presidency, he'd give the order to draw a new plan and that it would take 16 months to regroup and start getting the first troops home.<sup>36</sup> After that first phase of regrouping, a large share of the troops would be out of Iraq, and a smaller group would stay to train the Iraqi forces (but only if there was democratic political progress in the Iraqi government) and to hunt down Al-Qaeda.

That last solution, is the most bold, outspoken, and therefore also where both the media and his opponents focussed on. Obama said in 2007: "There is no military solution in Iraq. Only Iraq's leaders can settle the grievances at the heart of Iraq's civil war. We must apply pressure on them to act, and our best leverage is reducing our troop presence. And we must also do the hard and sustained diplomatic work in the region on behalf of peace and stability."<sup>37</sup> We recognise his focus on diplomacy again. He links Iraq to Afghanistan: "Ending the war will help isolate al Qaeda and give Iraqis the incentive and opportunity to take them out. It will also allow us to direct badly needed resources to Afghanistan. Our troops have fought valiantly there, but Iraq has deprived them of the support they need and deserve. As a result, parts of Afghanistan are falling into the hands of the Taliban, and a mix of terrorism, drugs, and corruption threatens to overwhelm the country. As President, I would deploy at least two additional brigades to Afghanistan."<sup>38</sup>

He said that making a plan to get out responsibly, would be one of his first actions as a president, and it was.

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<sup>35</sup> CGH, *Iraq leader Maliki supports Obama's withdrawal plans*. Spiegel International, Published 19/07/2008. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,566841,00.html> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>36</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>37</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 5

## 4.2. EXECUTION OF THE WITHDRAWAL IN IRAQ.

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Officially<sup>39</sup>: On February 27, 2009, on his 39th day in office (and ten days after he announced to send 21000 additional troops to Afghanistan), President Obama announced his new Iraq-strategy: “By August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end and Iraqi Security Forces will have full responsibility for major combat missions. After August 31, 2010, the mission of United States forces in Iraq will fundamentally change. Our forces will have three tasks: train, equip, and advise the Iraqi Security Forces; conduct targeted counterterrorism operations; and provide force protection for military and civilian personnel.”<sup>40</sup> In numbers it means that 92000 troops will leave Iraq in 2010 and the last 50000 would leave in 2011. After that, most aid will be financial, intelligence and diplomatic.

August 2010 is in the 20<sup>th</sup> month of his presidency, so not the 16<sup>th</sup> as he promised during the campaign<sup>41</sup>, but only a few Democrats seemed to be concerned about that. Most reactions, Democrat, Republican and Iraqi, were positive<sup>42</sup>. Conservatives were a bit concerned on the 2011 abrupt ending. Tom Donnelly, neoconservative, research fellow at AEI, military analyst and journalist wrote for the Weekly Standard blog, calling it a transition from a “a long-term strategic partnership to a guarantee of withdrawal”<sup>43</sup> and “strategy by timetable rather than timetable by strategy”<sup>44</sup>.

On April 6, 2009, Obama made a 5-hour ‘surprise trip’ to Iraq, after his 8 days in Europe for the G20 and NATO summits. In Turkey, where he had just given his speech that “the US is not at war with Islam”<sup>45</sup> BBC journalists didn’t call it a surprise, they just didn’t know if he was going to go to Iraq or Afghanistan. Obama eventually chose Iraq, to make sure that even as attention focuses to Afghanistan, Iraq is not forgotten.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> WHITEHOUSE, *Foreign Policy Issues*. [http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/) Consulted 14/07/2009.

<sup>40</sup> OBAMA, B. *Remarks of President Barack Obama- Responsibly ending the war in Iraq*. Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Transcript, Published 27/02/2009. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/) Consulted 14/07/2009.

<sup>41</sup> OBAMA FOR AMERICA, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*. Three Rivers Press, New York, 2008, p. 109.

<sup>42</sup> BBC NEWS, *Obama outlines Iraq pullout plan*. BBC (video and commentaries) Published 27/02/2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7914061.stm> Consulted 16/07/2009.

<sup>43</sup> DONNELLY, T., *Obama's Iraq Withdrawal Speech*. The Weekly Standard, video, Published 27/02/2009. [http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2009/02/obamas\\_iraq\\_withdrawal\\_plan\\_1.asp](http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2009/02/obamas_iraq_withdrawal_plan_1.asp) Consulted 14/07/2009.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> TRAN, M., *Us is not at war with Islam, says Barack Obama. US president tells Turkish parliament that partnership with Muslim world is critical in confronting al-Qaida ideology*. The Guardian, Published 06/04/2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/06/barack-obama-turkey-armenia>, Consulted 16/07/2009

<sup>46</sup> BBC NEWS, *Obama urges Iraqis to take charge*. BBC News, video, Published 07/04/2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7988065.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7988065.stm) Consulted 14/07/2009.

He met with General Odierno to talk “about how even with the recent bombings, security incidents, which is a measure of activity on the ground, is at its lowest since the war began.” He followed his campaign promise by discussing mental health support for the troops with Odierno, according to Press Secretary Gibbs<sup>47</sup>, but things are still stuck in Congress, and the money is scarce.

The most important message that Obama wanted to send out, was the fact that the Iraqi politicians must “take responsibility for their country”. The press statement explained that as “the need to continue to build strong Iraqi institutions; the importance of upcoming elections (...), the integration of Sunnis into the security forces, the balance between federal and national institutions, and the hydrocarbon law.”<sup>48</sup>

Obama also met with PM Maliki and President Talibani. He “confirmed his plans to withdraw all US troops from Iraq by the end of 2011”<sup>49</sup> and said that the next 18 months, until the first large withdrawal, were crucial. Suicide bombings are more regular and make more victims again, and the press is dividing its international attention a little better, making the situation in Iraq look worse again. On April 24, 2009, Christopher Hill, 57 years old, started his new job, as freshly appointed ambassador to Iraq. Hill is one of the best foreign policy officials, and was the negotiator with North Korea for the last few years. In the nineties, he has worked with Richard Holbrooke in the Balkans. With 130 000 soldiers leaving the country in the next two years, a shift away from the military, it is now time for the diplomatic means and ends. Hill has to lead that shift and the diplomacy after the withdrawal.<sup>50</sup>

On his hundredth day, Obama gave a prime time press conference.<sup>51</sup> It was tightly directed, the journalists were drilled, Obama had a list with names of reporters and it was obvious that he had received the questions and studied the answers. The journalists also didn’t get the chance to reply after Obama’s answer.

Iraq was one of the questions asked by Boston Globe’s Jeff Mason. He asked if “this large-scale violence there right now, does that affect the U.S. strategy at all for withdrawal and could it affect the timetable that you’ve set out for troops?”<sup>52</sup> Obama answered that there was indeed a surge of bombings, but that is relatively low compared to the last few years and that the political system is

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<sup>47</sup> GIBBS, R., *Press Gaggle*. Published 07/04/2009. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Gaggle-by-Press-Secretary-Robert-Gibbs-at-Al-Faw-Palace-Iraq-4-7-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Gaggle-by-Press-Secretary-Robert-Gibbs-at-Al-Faw-Palace-Iraq-4-7-09/) Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> BBC NEWS, Obama urges Iraqis to take charge. BBC News, video, Published 07/04/2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7988065.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7988065.stm) Consulted 14/07/2009.

<sup>50</sup> GHOSH, B., *The Negotiator*, Time, Vol. 173, No. 25, Published 22/06/2009, p. 26-27.

<sup>51</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama 100 days Press Conference*. The Huffington Post, transcript, Published 29/04/2009.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/29/obama-100-days-press-conf\\_n\\_193283.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/29/obama-100-days-press-conf_n_193283.html) Consulted 16/07/2009.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



functioning in Iraq<sup>53</sup>. He then repeated exactly what Gibbs had said 2 months earlier: political change, engagement of Sunni's and Kurds, fair division of oil revenues, fair division of power between different branches of the government, etc.

#### **4.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION ON IRAQ.**

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What can we conclude on the Iraq-part of Obama's foreign policy?

- He kept of his most important campaign promises, he is getting out. After 2010, the Iraq policy of the US will no longer be based on military means, but on diplomacy and humanitarian aid. In the meanwhile, fingers crossed and hope that Iraq won't tumble into a civil war.
- Obama talks to Syria, he sent an ambassador<sup>54</sup> and he has offered to talk to Iran.
- Chris Hill is one of the best diplomatic officials in the US. That means change compared to Bush, but not compared to Clinton. Some of the voters might feel that they've been cheated. We'll see at the midterm elections in 15 months.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> LABOTT, E., *Obama to send U.S. ambassador back to Syria*. Washington, CNN, Published 24/06/2009.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/06/24/us.syria/index.html> Consulted 14/07/2009.

## **5. GLOBAL TERRORISM: FINISH THE FIGHT AGAINST AL QAEDA.**

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*This is a war we have to win.*

*Barack Obama on Afghanistan – July 15, 2008 – Washington DC*<sup>55</sup>

### **5.1. OBAMA’S INTEGRATED VISION ON TERRORISM.**

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Obama’s plan to fight global terrorism is divided into 6 major issues<sup>56</sup>, but most of the attention goes to Afghanistan and Pakistan. I’ll start with his integrated, total opinion on terrorism, before addressing 3 of the 6 issues, being:

- Fighting global terrorism
- The Right battlefield: Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Restoring our values: (criticises torture, Guantanamo, warrantless wiretaps and the Patriot Act)

Diplomacy is also one of his 5 big focus points, so it’s not being addressed here, but in chapter 8. Bioterrorism, cyberterrorism and the reform of Homeland Security are detailed, operational plans, so they’re not being discussed in this thesis.

#### **5.1.1. OBAMA’S CAMPAIGN PROMISES ON TERRORISM.**

Obama blamed the Bush-Cheney-government’s reaction on 9/11. He deliberately uses both names, to use the unpopularity of Cheney and to show the alleged lack of leadership/competence of Bush. He calls it “a 20<sup>th</sup>-century reaction on a 21st-century problem”<sup>57</sup>. Before 9/11, the Bush government knew for over a month, that “Bin Laden determined to strike in US”<sup>58</sup>, as the headline in a security briefing with president Bush present on August 6, 2001 said. After the shock, “Americans were united. Friends

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<sup>55</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>56</sup> OBAMA FOR AMERICA, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*. Three Rivers Press, New York, 2008, 273 p.

<sup>57</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>58</sup> CNN, *Transcript: Bin Laden determined to strike in US*. CNN, Published 10/04/2004. <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/10/august6.memo/>, Consulted 10/07/2009.

around the world stood shoulder to shoulder with us. (...) But then everything changed.”<sup>59</sup> Obama blames Bush for not focussing on Al Qaeda, letting them escape in Afghanistan and starting a new war in Iraq, where Al Qaeda didn’t exist: “The President would have us believe that every bomb in Baghdad is part of al Qaeda’s war against us, not an Iraqi civil war. He elevates al Qaeda in Iraq – which didn’t exist before our invasion.”<sup>60</sup> Al Zarqawi was eventually called the Prince of Al Qaeda in Iraq, but it took a while before he and Bin Laden got along and he was actually given that name.

Professor Coolsaet, from the Belgian Ghent University, uses this example to make his point that Al Qaeda doesn’t really exist anymore, as an organization. That might have changed recently, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, when they melted together with some other terrorist groups, but a lot of Al Qaeda chapters just call themselves a-Al Qaeda and some probably do, without permission from Bin Laden or his number 2 Al Zawahiri.<sup>61</sup>

Obama does not agree with Coolsaet’s vision. He has the strong conviction that “because of a war in Iraq that should never have been authorized and should never have been waged, we are now less safe than we were before 9/11.”<sup>62</sup> It was a mistake thinking that “the danger was overseas, a threat to embassies and military installations. The extremism, the resentment, the terrorist training camps, and the killers were in the dark corners of the world, far away from the American homeland.”<sup>63</sup> To Obama, 9/11, is a pivotal year in history, the beginning of a new era in history, the event of a new generation.<sup>64</sup>

Obama says that Al Qaeda has reorganised itself and is now as strong as around the time of 9/11. “The threat to our homeland from al Qaeda is persistent and evolving. Iraq is a training ground for terror, torn apart by civil war. Afghanistan is more violent than it has been since 2001. Al Qaeda has a sanctuary in Pakistan. Israel is besieged by emboldened enemies, talking openly of its destruction. Iran is now presenting the broadest strategic challenge to the United States in the Middle East in a generation. Groups affiliated with or inspired by al Qaeda operate worldwide. Six years after 9/11, we are again in the midst of a summer of threat, with Bin Laden and many more terrorists determined to strike in the United States.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> COOLSAET, R., *Macht en waarden in de wereldpolitiek. Actuele vraagstukken in de internationale politiek*. Editie 2007-2008, Academia Press, Gent, 2007, 284p.

<sup>62</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid p. 2

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

In his interview with Fareed Zakaria mid July 2008, he showed us that he sees the deeper causes of terrorism and that he's willing to work on them. He said there are multiple causes, and gives 3 examples:

- "I think the problems of terrorism and groups that are resisting modernity, whether because of their ethnic identities or religious identities."<sup>66</sup>

- He also links it with the economic situation of the nations in the Middle East and West Asia, and gives the example of Indonesia. When he lived there, aged 8 to 12, "Indonesia was never the same culture as the Arab Middle East. The brand of Islam was always different. (...) There was not the sense that Islam was inherently opposed to the West, or inherently opposed to modern life, or inherently opposed to universal traditions, like rule of law." Today is a different situation, he claims, "You can see some correlation between the economic crash during the Asian financial crisis, where about a third of Indonesia's GDP was wiped out, and the acceleration of these Islamic extremist forces. (...) But what is absolutely true is that there has been a shift in Islam that I believe is connected to the failures of governments, and the failures of the West to work with many of these countries, in order to make sure that opportunities are there, that there's bottom-up economic growth."<sup>67</sup>

- Getting to know the culture of the Islamic world is an important solution to Obama. "To defeat this enemy, we must understand who we are fighting against, and what we are fighting for."<sup>68</sup>

So he acknowledges the root causes, and he doesn't claim that states are the level in society that should be challenged. That's a big change, compared to George W. Bush, who used the rhetoric of non-state-actors, but held the countries and governments of Afghanistan and Iraq accountable in practice.

Obama's solution, is not so much on an individual level though, but on a supranational level. "What we also want to do is to shrink the pool of potential recruits. And that involves engaging the Islamic world rather than vilifying it, and making sure that we understand that, not only are those in Islam who would resort to violence a tiny fraction of the Islamic world, but that also, the Islamic world itself is

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<sup>66</sup> ZAKARIA, F., *Obama's Foreign Policy Examined*. CNN Transcript, Aired 28/12/2008. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/28/fzgps.01.html> Consulted 03/07/2009.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 4.

diverse, and that lumping together Shia extremists with Sunni extremists, assuming that Persian culture is the same as Arab culture (...) result in us not only being less effective in hunting down and isolating terrorists, but also in alienating what need to be our long-term allies on a whole host of issues.”<sup>69</sup> That’s quite an accusation towards George W. Bush, and said mid July, it might also be directed towards John McCain.

### 5.1.2. EXECUTION OF HIS GLOBAL VISION ON TERRORISM.

*Obama has more czars than the Romanovs  
– who ruled Russia for 3 centuries –  
Romanovs 18, cyberczar makes 20  
SenJohnMcCain, Twitter, 30/05/2009*<sup>70</sup>

Obama immediately appointed several Special Envoys and Assistant Secretaries of State, like Richard Holbrooke (Afghanistan and Pakistan), George Mitchell (Middle East), etc. But that doesn’t mean he treats all regions differently, or that he doesn’t have an integrated, comprehensive vision.

Obama blamed Bush for not acknowledging the differences and complexities of “groups with very different goals: al Qaeda and Iran, Shiite militias and Sunni insurgents”<sup>71</sup>, criminals, insurgents who fight foreign occupiers and terrorists. “Just because the President misrepresents our enemies does not mean we do not have them.”<sup>72</sup> But he makes the same mistake, now as president. A common phrase in his terminology is “the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban”. They’re always mentioned together. Is that on purpose? Doesn’t he make a difference between Taliban and Al Qaeda? He doesn’t make clear who is doing what, where and why in the border zone. In every speech, he names both of them after each other, without explaining the difference: “It is unacceptable that almost seven years after nearly 3,000 Americans were killed on our soil, the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahari are recording messages to their followers and plotting more terror. The Taliban controls parts of Afghanistan. Al Qaeda has an expanding base in Pakistan that is probably no farther from their old Afghan sanctuary than a train ride from Washington to

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<sup>69</sup> ZAKARIA, F., *Obama’s Foreign Policy Examined*. CNN Transcript, Aired 28/12/2008. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/28/fzgps.01.html> Consulted 03/07/2009.

<sup>70</sup> JOHNSON, S., *How Twitter will change the way we live*, Time, Vol. 173, No. 24, 15/06/2009, p. 30.

<sup>71</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

Philadelphia.”<sup>73</sup> There is nothing wrong in the statement above. And it is clear that both groups work together. And it is clear that formerly independent muslim extremist groups have taken their name, or that they have joined either Al Qaeda or the Taliban. But that doesn’t change the fact, that Obama himself makes the same mistake.

However, during the campaign, he didn’t say that. In his important foreign policy speech at the Wilson Center, he said “Groups affiliated with or inspired by al Qaeda operate worldwide. Six years after 9/11, we are again in the midst of a summer of threat, with Bin Laden and many more terrorists determined to strike in the United States.”<sup>74</sup> So, in his long speeches for academia and think tanks, he acknowledges that there are groups ‘affiliated with or inspired by Al Qaeda’. But now, as a president, he no longer does.

### **5.1.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION ON OBAMA’S GLOBAL VISION ON TERRORISM.**

Obama thinks that Bush made some wrong choices, but they agree on a lot of issues. They agree that terrorists are at war with the world. They’re only a small part of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, and they make victims in every country and religious group. Obama and Bush use the same rhetoric in the method of response: this is a new kind of war, a new kind of threat, we need to change the way we protect ourselves, etc.

I don’t agree, and I follow professor Coolsaet: terrorism has actually existed forever. Obama might know it too. But as a rhetoric trick, and to convince Americans that they can finish a job no generation has done before, and to honor the troops, and to keep the theme of ‘change’ going, it may be a good thing, to say it is unprecedented.

Obama admits that defeating terrorism has to address the root causes: ethnic and religious differences, addressing unfair economic relations, threat other cultures with respect, do not assume that there is something like Western supremacy, etc. But he also stresses universal values, that are also inherent to the American set of values: human rights, rule of law, economic protection, religious freedom, fair and honest elections, etc.

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<sup>73</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>74</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 3.

## 5.2. THE RIGHT BATTLEFIELD: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN.

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*We can't succeed in Afghanistan  
or secure our homeland  
unless we change our Pakistan policy.*<sup>75</sup>

### 5.2.1. CAMPAIGN PROMISES.

Obama's official campaign program, as published in his book, dealt with these countries separately, but on his website, he takes them together. In practice, he has too, so that's why this thesis follows that form.

Iraq was an important battlefield of the global war on terrorism, according to George W. Bush. By now, it is clear that Obama does not agree, and we all know where the main focus of that fight is taking place according to him: Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama has linked those two countries together, and that's a right analysis, but it makes things more complicated. In fact, all countries are connected, and states are only one level to look at, and Obama knows that: "It's not just an Afghanistan problem, but it's an Afghanistan-Pakistan-India-Kashmir-Iran-problem"<sup>76</sup>.

Except for those Middle Eastern and West-Asian countries, there are other chapters in his foreign policy plan too, and they're not so well known. His campaign website<sup>77</sup> has 2 to 5 page-plans for almost every region or major country (like Russia, China, India, Israel, etc.)

Obama links his opposition against the war in Iraq, with the war in Afghanistan: "I did not oppose all wars. I was a strong supporter of the war in Afghanistan. But I said I could not support 'a dumb war, a rash war' in Iraq. I worried about a 'U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences' in the heart of the Muslim world. I pleaded that we 'finish the fight with bin Laden and al Qaeda'."<sup>78</sup>

Additional troops to Afghanistan, was an important priority in the campaign. In his interview with Fareed Zakaria, he said he didn't like to determine the number, just like he didn't like to say how

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<sup>75</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008.

<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>76</sup> STENGEL, R., *Person of the Year. The Interview*. Time, Vol. 172, No. 26, Published 29/12/2008, pp. 52-55.

<sup>77</sup> OBAMA, B., *Campaign website*. [http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index\\_campaign.php](http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/index_campaign.php) Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>78</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 3.

much troops had to leave Iraq in the first withdrawal, but the way politics work these days, he had to. Mid 2008, that had already changed to “at least two brigades” That should also result in pressure on the NATO-allies to raise their number of troops in Afghanistan. Mid 2008, NATO had 50000 troops in Afghanistan. Except increasing the number of troops, NATO allies should also change but their rules of engagement. Belgian, German, almost all European troops have very specific restrictions. For German troops for example, that means no actions at night.

Obama wants to learn from the mistakes of the war in Iraq: his vision is not just military, but also political and economic. He also wants to increase non-military aid with \$1 billion. The war on opium and heroin, is an important part of the war in Afghanistan. Another example of how Obama connects all the dots.<sup>79</sup> Obama sees the weak state of Afghanistan during the last 20 years, as one the biggest problems, and one of the reasons why it was so easy for the Taliban to take control. The EU called Afghanistan a failed state in their European Security Strategy<sup>80</sup> of 2003. Obama doesn't go that far. He does make the connection between the strength of the state system and the omnipresent corruption, poppy production and lack of development. Anti-corruption, building and increasing the justice system, developing institutions, farmer aid and local aid for communities are the main goals. All this in cooperation with the Afghan government as a part of the ‘more for more’-approach: The less corruption and the better the Afghan government works, the more they get. Conditionality, as they call it in the politico-scientific jargon.

The most dangerous region of Afghanistan was, at the time of the campaign, according to Obama, the border zone with Pakistan. “This is the wild frontier of our globalized world. There are wind-swept deserts and cave-dotted mountains. There are tribes that see borders as nothing more than lines on a map, and governments as forces that come and go. There are blood ties deeper than alliances of convenience, and pockets of extremism that follow religion to violence. It's a tough place. But that is no excuse. There must be no safe-haven for terrorists who threaten America. We cannot fail to act because action is hard.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>80</sup> E.U., *A secure Europe in a better world. The European Security Strategy*. Published 12/12/2003. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> 15p.

<sup>81</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 6.



### 5.2.2. EXECUTION OF THE AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN POLICY.

Three days after he was inaugurated, Obama called together his National Security Council and told them that the deteriorating war in Afghanistan and Pakistan were his most important foreign policy objective.<sup>82</sup> None of the three possible strategies, made by different generals, was going to be enough to contain the deterioration. General Petraeus asked for too much troops, without addressing the most important problem: the Pakistani Taliban governing the frontier zone and hundreds of square miles in the SWAT valley and Waziristan.

One of his first actions, was to appoint Richard Holbrooke as the Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. He also replaced the leading officer David McKiernan by Stan McChrystal, who has more experience with irregular warfare, special operations and hit-and-run-attacks.<sup>83</sup>

On February, he announced his Afghanistan plan: The first number that circulated was 17000 additional troops (for example in Joe Klein's excellent Time article<sup>84</sup>), but the website of the Whitehouse states "the deployment of more than 21,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan."<sup>85</sup> The 4000 difference are instructors of the Afghan army. But additional troops, mean nothing without a new strategy. That strategy has four different aspects:

- An increased effort from NATO partners. At the NATO-summit in Strasbourg, he asked the Europeans for more troops and looser rules of engagement, as promised during the campaign.
- Operation Khanjar: in short conquering the province of Helmand, that is now controlled by the Taliban.
- More training and more Afghan capacity: every American unit will be partnered with an Afghan unit. Same story as Iraq: eventually they'll have to do it themselves.<sup>86</sup>
- It won't work, if the Pakistani border isn't safe: more civilian effort. Obama supports the Kerry-Lugar-bill to provide \$1.5 billion directly to Pakistani people.<sup>87</sup>

In June and July, casualties on all sides were increasing. Terrorist, civilian and coalition troops. Almost 8 years after the first troops entered Afghanistan, 1200 coalition troops have died, 730 of them were American.<sup>88</sup> With the election in Afghanistan coming up on August 20, 2009, things were only heating up...

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<sup>82</sup> KLEIN, J., *The scariest places*. Time, Vol. 173, No. 11, Published 16/03/2009, pp. 14-15.

<sup>83</sup> THOMPSON, M., *Starting anew*. Time, Vol. 174, No. 2, Published 20/07/2009, pp. 16-19.

<sup>84</sup> KLEIN, J., *The scariest places*. Time, Vol. 173, No. 11, Published 16/03/2009, p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/>, Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>86</sup> OBAMA, B., *A new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Published 27/03/2009.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/27/A-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/>, Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> THOMPSON, M., *Starting anew*. Time, Vol. 174, No. 2, Published 20/07/2009, pp. 16-19.

### 5.2.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION.

Obama kept his promise: Afghanistan is a priority, the focus on Al Qaeda is back. Al Qaeda has changed however, the Taliban has different splinter groups, but Obama takes on the fight. He convinced the Pakistani government to take action. On the Afghan side, we have to wait for the results of the elections first.

A new military policy has been created in the first few months, and his attention for civilian solutions too. Like the Iraq-policy, the Afghan are involved and will have to finish the job. The new strategy was put in motion in July, so it's too early to make conclusions, again, also because of the elections.

### 5.3. RESTORING OUR VALUES.

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In the campaign, Obama often linked terrorism to Guantanamo, renditions and the use of torture. He used the phrase 'restoring our values' to group them.

The first thing he did as President, is well known: closing Guantanamo. Unfortunately the truth is a bit more complicated. He issued four executive orders. The first ordered an investigation to close Guantanamo by January 2010. The others ended the sketchy legal memos from John Yoo, justifying the war on terror: "that the Geneva Conventions would be applied to the treatment of prisoners arrested as terrorists (some on very flimsy or no evidence); and that torture (including waterboarding) would be forbidden. The President also abolished the secret prisons that the US had maintained to hold wartime suspects; and ended the policy of "extraordinary renditions" to countries known to torture prisoners. He also requested a stay on cases pending in the one-sided military tribunals that had been set up under Bush."<sup>89</sup>

Obama's philosophy of mixing idealism with realism was successful to win the elections and seems a successful recipe to govern as well. In his first 100 days he seems to have kept his promise, so far. His first few actions as a president showed idealism, but they were also important for the main goal of his policy: reclaiming the respect of the rest of the world, in order to reclaim the position of the US in the world, namely the position of leadership. There can be no leadership without legitimacy, so closing down Guantanamo and ending torture, was urgent and necessary to get back that legitimacy.

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<sup>89</sup> DREW, E., *The Thirty days of Barack Obama*. New York Review of Books, Vol 56, Number 5, Published 26/03/2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22450>, Consulted 02/07/2009.

## **6. BUILDING AN ARMY FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

### **– PEOPLE FIRST.**

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Obama used the two slogans above, and they both summarise his priorities, so that's why they're both in the title.

#### **6.1. CAMPAIGN PROMISES.**

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Obama believes that it is of massive importance that the military continues to get the means, necessary to remain the largest military force this world has ever known.<sup>90</sup> He repeats that the security problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (non-state-actors, terrorism, failed states) are new threats (as already discussed in the chapter on terrorism) and that the military has adapted to this new situation. He mentioned the rise of new powers in several documents and speeches, without going into detail, or naming them.

On his campaign website<sup>91</sup>, he analyses the current situation: in the last 6 years, the US forces were being driven to their maximum. Multiple and increasingly longer tours of duty are common. Recruiting numbers are going down and the number of people resigning is going up. 58% of the graduating personnel at West Point immediately leaves the army. 3000 captains and majors are short. The civilian aspect of the two wars is largely ignored, worsening the situation on the military aspect.

But Obama's vision is not just about growing and improving the military. The Cold War is over, and Obama wants to review all defense programs, adapting them to possible threats of the post 9/11-world. The military personnel has to learn how to deal with civilian, cultural and humanitarian affairs as well: special operations, development aid, intelligence, and foreign expertise become more and more important. That's why Obama wants to invest in the knowledge of foreign languages, cultural awareness, anti-guerrilla tactics, stabilization courses and a special advisory corps to use the capacities of local allies.

Obama's website has subtitles on the amount of troops, the air force, the navy, and intelligence. He also briefly mentions that he has plans for the National Guard and a plan for veterans, for space defense, etc. Not all of these detailed plans will be discussed in this thesis. The word limit is restricted, and only the main issues can answer our research questions.

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<sup>90</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense.

[http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf) Consulted 02/08/2009, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

### **6.1.1. MORE TROOPS, BETTER TRAINED, BETTER EQUIPED.**

Obama wants to expand the army with 65000 people and the marines with 27000<sup>92</sup>. He says the Bush administration asked too much deployment with not enough time in between which put too much pressure on the military families. As a senator he co-signed or amended several bills, for example the Webb-Hagel-bill<sup>93</sup>, trying to make sure that troops were trained long enough, before they were sent into active duty. Obama said several times in his campaign, that people were being sent to Iraq and Afghanistan too fast, lacking both individual and unit-training.

According to Obama, technology improvements and equipment should be adapted to the reality on the ground, and not depend on the constituency of members of the House and Senate and the factories in their voting area.

Civilians should be integrated into the forces for those problems that are not purely militarily anymore, as is the case now in Afghanistan and will be more and more in the future.

### **6.1.1. AIR FORCE.**

America's air force is unseen, and Obama wants to keep it that way. The air force was of major importance in the 3 weeks conquering Iraq, and it's still very useful to protect the troops on the ground. "We must preserve our unparalleled airpower capabilities"<sup>94</sup>. Obama wants to invest more in advanced technologies, "from unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic warfare capabilities to improvements like the C-17-freight-plane and the KC-X air refueling aircraft—which may not be glamorous to politicians, but are the backbone of our future ability to extend global power."<sup>95</sup> In more direct terms, that means another warning to politicians thinking to get their earmarks in equipment bills.

### **6.1.3. NAVY.**

"Maintain Power Projection at Sea: The sea remains vital for global trade and the fast positioning of our troops in times of crisis"<sup>96</sup>. A large navy is important, but expensive. Again, a focus on new, more, but cheaper equipment. Obama wants to invest in naval R&D, buy American, but build smaller battleships, river ships and improve the compatibility with the Coast Guard.

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<sup>92</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense.

[http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf) Consulted 02/08/2009, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> WEBB, J., *Sens. Webb, Hagel, Lautenberg and Veterans' Groups advocate comprehensive 21<sup>st</sup> century GI Bill in FY09 Budget*. Published 13/02/2008. <http://webb.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=292863>, Consulted 13/08/2009.

<sup>94</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense.

[http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf), Consulted 02/08/2009, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense.

[http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf), Consulted 15/08/2009, p. 8.

#### 6.1.4. INTELLIGENCE.

The intelligence part of his defense reform, is the operational answer to much of his general vision of things that need to change: the knowledge of foreign languages, cultural awareness, anti-guerilla tactics, stabilization courses, engineers, information technology experts, etc. First the intelligence sector, but in time, all forces should focus on adding these skills to their traditional training.

#### 6.2. EXECUTION OF THE DEFENSE POLICY.

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The White House- website <sup>97</sup> is proud to announce that Obama has announced a plan to end the war in Iraq, to have developed a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, including the deployment of 21 000 additional troops to Afghanistan, and a successful Nato Summit (more on that in chapter 8: the renewal of diplomacy). One other detail completes their list of achievements: The announcement of the “creation of a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record for members of the U.S. Armed Forces to improve quality of medical care.”<sup>98</sup> Three recycled plans and an electronic record, is not an impressive list of achievements. In Congress however, Obama and Secretary Gates have done a good job: In April Obama signed the Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act, ending no-bid-contracts, and executing an important campaign promise: Congress might be the instance that decides what equipment is being acquired, but the Department of Defense and the President want a hand in it. The threat of Obama to veto the budget bill, if the amount of F22 raptors wasn't lowered a few months later, was another proof.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/> Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>98</sup> WHITEHOUSE, *The care they were promised and the benefits that they have earned*. Published 09/04/2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/04/09/The-Care-They-Were-Promised-and-the-Benefits-That-They-Have-Earned/>, Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>99</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President at signing of the Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act*, Published 22/05/2009. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-signing-of-the-Weapons-Systems-Acquisition-Reform-Act/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-signing-of-the-Weapons-Systems-Acquisition-Reform-Act/) Consulted 15/08/2009.

### 6.2.1. DEFENSE APPOINTMENTS.

Obama has kept some high profile decision makers of the Bush era in place, but they were all appointed in the last 3 years. The most notable decision is of course the choice to keep Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. Because of that, Gates could influence to let other people stay on the job. General Petraeus, who was appointed to oversee the Central Command in October 2008. Petraeus former number 2, General Odierno, became the leading officer the US military operation in Iraq.

He has also appointed experienced military leaders, such as McChrystal, already mentioned above.

The retired Marine General James Jones was Obama's pick as National Security Adviser. Aged 64, Jones started as a platoon commander in Vietnam, rose to Commander of the Marine Corps and Supreme Allied Commander of NATO. In the last year of the Bush administration, he served as a "special envoy for Middle East security and chaired the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, a panel appointed by Congress that assessed the readiness of Iraqi troops."<sup>100</sup> He's also interested in energy security, which can also be seen as a foreign policy and defense topic that is not included in this thesis, but an interest of Obama.<sup>101</sup>

Retired Admiral Dennis Blair was Obama's pick as Director of National Intelligence.<sup>102</sup> That should facilitate the relationship between the military and the intelligence world. A bold move. DNI is a post created by Bush Jr., after 9/11, so there's no real traditional way of behaviour yet. It is a bold move.

Leon Panetta, 70, and a former Chief of Staff of Clinton, was chosen as head of the CIA. He "has little hands-on experience in intelligence, but supporters describe him as a consummate manager and bipartisan Capitol Hill insider who gets things done without alienating people."<sup>103</sup>

Former CIA officer John Brennan was chosen as Homeland Security adviser and deputy national security adviser for counterterrorism.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> COOLIDGE, R., *Obama selects Gen. James Jones for National Security Adviser*, ABC News, 01/12/2008, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/President44/story?id=6343271&page=1>, Consulted 16/08/2009

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> CNN, *Obama names CIA, national intelligence directors*, 09/01/2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/09/transition.wrap/index.html>, 15/08/2009

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

### 6.2.2. DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL.

A few lines in his campaign book, didn't get much attention in the mainstream press during the campaign, but the gay community definitely focussed on them. And after a few months in office, it almost backfired. "More than 10,000 service men and women have been discharged for sexual orientation since the "don't ask, don't tell" policy was implemented, at a cost of over \$360 million. Many of those forced out had special skills in high demand, such as Arabic translators, engineers and pilots. At a time when the military is having a tough time recruiting and retaining troops, it is wrong to deny our country the service of brave, qualified people"<sup>105</sup>.

On January 14th, a week before Obama was inaugurated, Robert Gibbs, Obama's communications director since 2004 and nowadays the White House Press Secretary, said that Obama would repeal don't ask don't tell, but not immediately. "here are many challenges facing our nation now and the president-elect is focused first and foremost on jump-starting this economy. So not everything will get done in the beginning but he's committed to following through with ending the policy against being openly gay in the military."<sup>106</sup> The gay world saw that as a delay, and some as a broken promise.

It got worse when Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said in a Sunday morning talk show that "The president and I feel like we've got a lot on our plates right now and let's push that one down the road a little bit."<sup>107</sup>

They kept the issue on the agenda, and in June/July, Obama invited over a hundred gay and lesbian community leaders and reassured them that he would work on the issue<sup>108</sup>, but that Congress had a big hand in it, and without giving a date.

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<sup>105</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense. [http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf) Consulted 02/08/2009, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> CNN, *Obama aide: Ending 'don't ask, don't tell' must wait*. CNN, Published 15/01/2009. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/14/obama.gays.military/> Consulted 12/08/2009.

<sup>107</sup> SAMMON, B., *Administration delays change to military's 'Don't ask Don't Tell' Policy*. Fox News, Published 29/03/2009. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/03/29/administration-delays-change-militarys-dont-ask-dont-tell-policy/> Consulted 12/08/2009.

<sup>108</sup> STOLBERG, S., *Obama invites gay rights advocates to White House*. New York Times, Published 22/06/2009. <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/22/obama-invites-gay-rights-advocates-to-white-house/>, Consulted 12/08/2009.

### 6.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION ON DEFENSE.

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Obama did some of his most remarkable appointments in the defense field. A lot has been put in motion, and now we're waiting for results.

Obama kept his promise on the buying-equipment-reform. An action that can only be applauded.

But the most important thing, is again the change in tone and discourse. At the White House- website stresses again, that "all elements of American power (...) should be used in an integrated and balanced fashion."<sup>109</sup> Meaning military, diplomatic, economic, legal and intelligence power. That's a very good approach and a big difference compared to the Bush administration. The people appointed to perform that job, seem qualified to execute, and convinced of this approach. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

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<sup>109</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/> Consulted 15/08/2009.



## 7. TOWARDS A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD.

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### 7.1. CAMPAIGN PROMISES.

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If you open the Obama campaign website, and you choose ‘foreign policy’, one of the first things you see is the message: “Secure loose nuclear materials from terrorists: Obama and Biden will secure all loose nuclear materials in the world within four years, and will negotiate a verifiable global ban on the production of new nuclear weapons material to curb the spread of nuclear weapons.”<sup>110</sup>

In 1983, Obama, then a senior at Columbia University, wrote in a campus newsmagazine about the vision of "a nuclear free world."<sup>111</sup> Growing up at the height of the cold war has influenced Obama’s vision on a nuclear free world.

In the campaign, Obama issued a 5-part-comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism worldwide. Some aspects were already discussed in chapter 5. In the strategy he pointed out that it was necessary to “Develop the capabilities and partnerships we need to capture or kill terrorists around the world and deny them the world’s most deadly weapons.”<sup>112</sup> By making Non Proliferation a part of this comprehensive strategy it became of major importance for the Democratic candidate. He argued that al Qaeda seeks a nuclear weapon, and can easily get one considering tons of highly enriched uranium and plutonium and thousands of nuclear weapons are poorly secured and scattered across different countries.<sup>113</sup> Also extreme regimes, like Iran and North Korea, threaten their neighbours, proliferate nuclear technology, and support terrorists.<sup>114</sup>

To refrain al Qaeda, other terrorist groups and extreme regimes the US should safeguard these most dangerous weapons. Obama searched on doing so by working together with republicans Dick Lugar (Republican Senator from Indiana, has been working on dismantling of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons for over 30 years) and Chuck Hagel (former Republican Senator for Nebraska, criticised Bush, Rove, Cheney and Rumsfeld a lot and was on Obama’s checklist for Vice-President or Secretary of Defense. He has retired of politics now to become Chairman of the Atlantic Council of the US) on these issues as a senator. “The Obama-Lugar initiative expands U.S. cooperation to destroy

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<sup>110</sup> WHITEHOUSE, *Foreign Policy Issues*, [http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/)

<sup>111</sup> OBAMA, B., *Breaking the war mentality*. Sundial, Published 10/03/1983. <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/images/nytint/docs/obama-s-1983-college-magazine-article/original.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009.

<sup>112</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*, speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*, Fact sheet on defense, 12p. [http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf) Consulted 02/08/2009 p.1.

conventional weapons and expands the State Department's ability to detect and interdict weapons and materials of mass destruction."<sup>115</sup> In other words, the law made it possible to help the U.S. and its allies to detect and stop the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction. Obama and Lugar went in 2006 on a trip to monitor Russian efforts to scrap nuclear arms and secure atomic materials from theft or diversion.<sup>116</sup>

The Obama -Hagel bill<sup>117</sup> passed through Congress in December 2007 and outlined a strategy to fortify U.S. Non Proliferation and disarmament policy, including action on START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). As a senator his views opposed to building a new generation of nuclear arms.<sup>118</sup>

In his campaign promises Obama renewed the commitment towards the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. According to him, both the US and Russia did not make sufficient progress to reduce the size of their nuclear arsenals. This has undermined their commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Obama would set course to reduce reliance on these weapons and prevent them from getting into dangerous hands – whether they are states or terrorists.<sup>119</sup> To accomplish this (secure all nuclear weapons materials at vulnerable sites within four years), he would work together with Russia. As president, Obama will work with Russia to find common ground, end the Cold War stance on nukes and bring significantly more weapons off hair-trigger alert.<sup>120</sup>

As a President Obama wished to contribute further to make the world nuclear free; while working to secure existing stockpiles, he wished to negotiate a verifiable global ban on the production of new nuclear weapons material. Also he vowed “to use the power of American diplomacy to stop countries from obtaining these weapons.”<sup>121</sup> A huge difference in style towards ‘the naughty countries’ (axis of evil) compared to Bush's years.

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<sup>115</sup> LUGAR, R., Lugar-Obama signed into law. Press release of Senator Lugar, Published 11/01/2007.

<http://lugar.senate.gov/press/record.cfm?id=267485> Consulted 20/07/2009.

<sup>116</sup> OBAMA, B., *The Audacity of Hope. Thoughts on reclaiming the American Dream*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2006, p. 297-300.

<sup>117</sup> US SENATE, C. 1977, Published 02/08/2007. [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:s1977is.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:s1977is.txt.pdf) Consulted 20/07/2009.

<sup>118</sup> BROAD, W.J., *Obama's youth shaped his nuclear-free vision*. New York, The NY Times, Published, 04/07/2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/05/world/05nuclear.html> Consulted 20/07/2009.

<sup>119</sup> OBAMA, B., *A 21st century military for America*. Fact sheet on defense, 12p. [http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Defense_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf) Consulted 02/08/2009 p.7.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>121</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*, speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 8.

## 7.2. EXECUTION OF THE NON PROLIFERATION AGENDA.

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*So today,*

*I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.*

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*Barack Obama, Prague, April 5, 2009*<sup>122</sup>

The Non Proliferation Treaty has a major summit in 2010, and it's one of Obama's personal goals, to be well prepared, achieve goals before the summit, in order to set an example and be able to raise demands to other states owning or pursuing nuclear weapons. No previous American president has set out a step-by-step agenda for the eventual elimination of nuclear arms.<sup>123</sup>

His first step was to end the research on the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW), a program that begun in the Bush years to make a new generation of arms.<sup>124</sup>

He repeated his vision to secure all nuclear weapons materials at vulnerable sites within four years in Prague, but a Harvard analysis already questions the budget request, saying "it is too small to implement such a plan".<sup>125</sup>

In his campaign, Obama promised to engage in talks with Russia, and he did. He went to Russia in the beginning of summer, before the G8-summit in L'Aquila. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev reached an outline agreement to cut back their nations' stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The "joint understanding" signed in Moscow would see reductions of deployed nuclear warheads to below 1,700 each within seven years of a new treaty. The accord would replace the 1991 Start I treaty, which expires in December.<sup>126</sup>

With Iran's nuclear ambitions, not so much progress has been made, but Obama did reach out to them, and has asked Iran to come to the table. But the elections in Iran, made it very difficult for him.

Obama also appointed a Non Proliferation Czar, Gary Samore, who held a similar position in the Clinton administration.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> OBAMA, B., *Transcript: Obama on Reducing Nuclear Arms*, CBS, Published 05/04/2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/04/08/politics/100days/worldaffairs/main4929145.shtml>, Consulted 15/08/2009

<sup>123</sup> BROAD, W.J., SANGER, D.E., *Obama's youth shaped his nuclear-free vision*. New York, The NY Times, Published 04/07/2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/05/world/05nuclear.html> Consulted 20/07/2009

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> BBC NEWS, *US and Russia agree nuclear cuts*. BBC, Published 06/07/2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8136918.stm> Consulted 20/07/2009.

<sup>127</sup> MILLER, J., *Gary Samore tapped for WMD Czar*. Published 29/01/2009. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/01/29/gary-samore-tapped-weapons-mass-destruction-czar/>, Consulted 14/08/2009.

### **7.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION ON NON PROLIFERATION.**

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The 2010 NPT Summit will be important, but so far, Obama has done very well. He's investing more time on this issue, then the press shares with us, and the agreement with Russia is a success. Iran has been less successful, but he definitely tried. It is obviously one of Obama's personal convictions, that strife towards a nuclear free world is one of his most important duties. It may not seem realistic, but in his first 210 days, he has already achieved more than Bush Jr. in his last 8 years.

## 8. THE RENEWAL OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY.

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*This cannot just be an American mission. Al Qaeda and its allies operate in nearly 100 countries. The United States cannot steal every secret, penetrate every cell, act on every tip, or track down every terrorist – nor should we have to do this alone. This is not just about our security.*

*It is about the common security of all the world.*

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*Barack Obama, Washington DC, 15/07/2008*<sup>128</sup>

### 8.1. CAMPAIGN PROMISES.

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As we have seen throughout all the previous chapters, the renewal of diplomacy was an essential part of all his proposal:

- in relation to Iraq, he wanted to talk to Syria and Iran and the international community for humanitarian aid.
- in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he wants more involvement from the NATO allies.
- in the defense chapter, we've seen that he wants to combine military power with all other powers, like legal, political, economic and, again, diplomatic power.
- Non proliferation and striving towards a nuclear free world, is top diplomacy.

So, apparently, diplomacy is very important to Obama. It is one of his favourite tools in foreign policy. It's a strong personal conviction of his, that Bush Jr. didn't use it enough, and made the world a more dangerous place. But his focus on diplomacy, is not only different from Bush, but also from Hillary. In the campaign, talking to Iran was a big issue.

In concreto, Obama divided the issue of diplomacy in five parts<sup>129</sup>:

- Talking to everybody, including all enemies: Cuba, Iran, and others. There's a quote from JFK, Obama likes the use: 'We should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate.'
- Addressing a root cause that influences lots of issues: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Obama has pushed for a two-state-solution.

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<sup>128</sup> OBAMA, B., *A New Strategy for a New World*. Speech (video) and transcript, Published 15/07/2008. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newstrategy> Consulted 15/07/2009.

<sup>129</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 20/07/2009, p. 7.

- Open more consulates, also in Africa
- Fight global poverty: embrace the Millennium Development Goals
- Strengthen NATO and relations with other alliances like ASEAN, OAS, etc.

‘Winning hearts and minds’ are words that have gotten a bitter taste by the multiple use of Obama’s predecessor. But it’s very important to Obama, he realises that it’s unavoidable.

In order to do that, the US has to remain an example of the universal values. Therefore, Obama promised to end the use of torture and extreme rendition, to close Guantanamo, and as we’ve already discussed, he has taken big steps on those issues.

## **8.2. EXECUTION OF OBAMA’S DIPLOMACY.**

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He has changed his policies towards Cuba, he has offered to talk to Iran, so he seems to follow JFK’s principle. He made his point to Israel and has sent a Special Envoy to the Middle East.

At the G20, G8 and NATO summits, Obama has listened and didn’t make big demands.

Obama’s first foreign trip was to Canada, but Hillary’s first made a little more noise here in the EU: She visited Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China first. Add that to Obama’s remark on the importance of the Chinese-American relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it got some people worried. But those are details, and not a part of this thesis.

## **8.3. PARTIAL CONCLUSION ON DIPLOMACY.**

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Let’s go back to the first research question/hypothesis: diplomacy is one of Obama’s favourite foreign policy tools. This thesis has shown that it came up at every aspect of his five priorities, and that all means are always used together. Obama’s diplomacy is very interconnected.

The first thing he wants to achieve is a change of tone. Did it work? It seems so.

Vice President Biden thinks that that message is already working. When Dick Cheney was getting headlines every day in April, he said that Cheney was “dead wrong”<sup>130</sup>. “The last administration left us in a weaker posture than we’ve been any time since World War II: less regarded in the world, stretched more thinly than we ever have been in the past, two wars under way, virtually no respect in entire parts of the world. And so we’ve been about the business of repairing and strengthening those. I guarantee you we are safer today, our interests are more secure today than they were any time during the eight years of the Bush administration.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> CBS, *Biden says Cheney Dead Wrong on Security Policy*, Published 07/04/2009. <http://cbs13.com/national/joe.biden.vice.2.979098.html>, Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

## 9. GENERAL CONCLUSION.

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The three research questions of this thesis were:

- Obama focuses on diplomacy. Changing the tone, the atmosphere is very important to him. But is that enough? And what has it been in practice? Can we speak of a new diplomacy, if it's only coming from one side, or is it just a change of the American tone?

- Obama's selection of staff is no change. Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, George Mitchell, Christopher Hill, etc..

Can this experienced bunch change and/or bring change?

- He put out five main goals during the campaign. What are they and did he treat all of them equally during his first few months?

In chapter three, on the philosophy of Obama's foreign policy, we saw that he admires the mix of idealism and realism of his examples Truman, Kennan, Marshall and Bush Sr. His speech on July 15, 2008, called 'A new Strategy for a new World', proved to be important for the execution of his campaign promises. He put out 5 priorities, all related to Rebuilding America's Leadership. Recovery of our position in the world.", the title of the foreign policy chapter in his campaign plan. He has criticised Bush Jr. for not declaring America's foreign policy doctrine of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but so far he hasn't done that either.

He has demonstrated to have an integrated, comprehensive vision though, using "all elements of American power, in an integrated and balanced fashion."<sup>132</sup>

The first actions of the President showed idealism, but they were also important for the main goal of his policy: reclaiming the respect of the rest of the world, in order to reclaim the position of the US in the world. There can be no leadership without legitimacy, so closing down Guantanamo, ending renditions, giving trials to the 'enemy combatants' and ending torture, was urgent and necessary to get back that legitimacy.

On February 27, 2009, Obama announced his new Iraq policy<sup>133</sup>: "By August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end"<sup>134</sup>. That means 92000 troops will leave Iraq in 2010 and the last 50000 would

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<sup>132</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/> Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>133</sup> WHITEHOUSE, *Foreign Policy Issues*. [http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/) Consulted 15/08/2009.

leave in 2011. After that, most aid will be financial, intelligence and diplomatic. Christopher Hill is an important pawn in that chess game. He did that for four reasons: there was inadequate progress in Iraq, and the only way to change that, was to put pressure on the Iraqi government. They decide on their own destiny. The second reason is that the Iraq war put too much strains on the military. That military is necessary for the place where the real war on terror is going on: in Afghanistan-Pakistan (-India-Kashmir-Iran).

Obama has a comprehensive vision on terrorism as well. In his discourse, he often mixes the Taliban with Al Qaeda, but in a long interview with Fareed Zakaria, he has proven to know the subtleties of the situation. Obama sees 3 root causes for terrorism: religious and ethnic identities deserve more respect and should be put in dialogue. The economic situation of the poor countries, and the growing inequalities between the Western world and other countries, and inside countries too, is a very important cause. Getting to know the culture of the Islamic world is an important solution to Obama. “To defeat this enemy, we must understand who we are fighting against, and what we are fighting for.”<sup>135</sup> But he also stresses universal values, that are also inherent to the American set of values: human rights, rule of law, economic protection, religious freedom, fair and honest elections, etc.

Obama thinks that Al Qaeda has grown stronger recently, and appointed Richard Holbrooke as the Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. He also replaced the leading officer David McKiernan by Stan McChrystal, who has more experience with irregular warfare, special operations and hit-and-run-attacks.<sup>136</sup>

McChrystal has to execute the new Strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama always puts those two countries together, a difficult, but wise decision. An important aspect of the new strategy is “the deployment of more than 21,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan.”<sup>137</sup> NATO allies are asked to send in more troops too. 4000 of the 21000 Americans are instructors to the Afghan army. Every American unit will be partnered with an Afghan unit. Same story as Iraq: eventually they’ll have to do it themselves.<sup>138</sup> The strategy won’t work, if the Afghan/Pakistani border isn’t secured. He convinced the Pakistani government to take action. On the Afghan side, we have to wait for the results of the elections first. In the meantime, operation Khanjar started in the province of Helmand. Casualties are higher on all sides. It’s too early to see the results of the strategy, but the approach seems comprehensive, and contain civilian, humanitarian and diplomatic tools as well.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> OBAMA, B., *Obama Unveils Comprehensive Strategy to Fight Global Terrorism*. Speech given at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 13p., Published 01/08/2007. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/obamasp0807.pdf> Consulted 10/08/2009, p. 4.

<sup>136</sup> THOMPSON, M., *Starting anew*. Time, Vol. 174, No. 2, Published 20/07/2009, pp. 16-19.

<sup>137</sup> WHITE HOUSE, *Issues: Defense*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/> Consulted 15/08/2009.

<sup>138</sup> OBAMA, B., *A new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Published 27/03/2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/27/A-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/>, Consulted 15/08/2009.



Obama has kept some high profile Defense decision makers in place, but also appointed surprises. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, General Petraeus and General Odierno stayed, McChrystal, James Jones, Dennis Blair, Leon Panetta came. Pushing down ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ “down the road a little bit”<sup>139</sup> stirred up some controversy, but it’s no longer in the headlines. Obama achieved some victories with the Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act and the F22 raptors. The military went up again in 2009, which is not sustainable on the long term, but for the Afghanistan and Iraq ambitions, it was necessary.

Non Proliferation is one of Obama’s personal duties as a president. He already worked on it during his university career. The agreement with the Russians is a success, talking to the Iranians not so much. The NPT summit of 2010 will be important. Striving towards a nuclear free world, may not be realistic, but in his first 210 days, he has already achieved more than Bush Jr. in his last 8 years.

Diplomacy is very important to Obama. It is one of his favourite tools in foreign policy. He talked to Cuba, Venezuela and sent an ambassador to Syria. He has offered to talk to Iran. And we’ll never really know what Bill Clinton said during those 5 hours in North Korea.

Vice President Biden said “we are safer today, our interests are more secure today than they were any time during the eight years of the Bush administration.”<sup>140</sup>

The change in tone is definitely there. The policies of a lot of priorities have been shaped, and a lot of things have been put in motion. Experienced Clintonites execute the change Obama has promised. But for now, they’re still words. A pessimist might say, they’re just words. An optimist says: words we can believe in.

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<sup>139</sup> SAMMON, B., *Administration delays change to military’s ‘Don’t ask Don’t Tell’ Policy*. Fox News, Published 29/03/2009. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/03/29/administration-delays-change-militarys-dont-ask-dont-tell-policy/> Consulted 12/08/2009.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

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