

Obama's Foreign Policy: Has He Earned a Second Term?

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Evaluating Obama's Foreign Policy

- In limited ways, success (world of woe receding):
 - Ending 2 Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - Killing OBL
 - Restoring America's Status
 - Avoiding a Depression
- In broader sense, failure (war clouds gathering):
 - In ME, alienated Israel, while Iran and Islamists gain
 - In Europe, weakened missile defense while Russia expands influence in Georgia, Ukraine and elsewhere
 - In Asia, touted cooperation, while China becomes more belligerent

Jigsaw Puzzle vs. Chess Match

- Succeeded by framing challenges as DISCRETE PROBLEMS to be solved by cooperation – a jigsaw puzzle model of world affairs
- Failed by neglecting larger STRATEGIC STRUGGLE between free and authoritarian societies and groups – a chess match or chessboard view of world affairs
- Successful presidents mix and match views to meet time and circumstances – Truman and Reagan won the Cold War
- Obama sees world too much as jigsaw puzzle and too little as chess match.

Jigsaw Puzzle Model

- Problems are Material not Moral – proliferation, multilateral institutions, resource use, and global poverty, not democracy and human rights
- Problems are Interrelated – No Priorities, Not Convinced of new “Asian Pivot”
- Interests are Shared not Competitive – “Leading from Behind,” Libyan Experience
- Use of Force is Last or Past Resort – War Necessary only AFTER (Afghanistan) not Before Attack (Iraq) and to stop genocide (Libya)

Chessboard Model

- Countries see Common Problems through Different Cultures and Political Ideologies – Bush: Freedom (consent) vs. Tyranny (coercion)
- Interests are Sovereign not Shared – China, Russia and Muslim extremists seek more Authoritarian not Freer World
- Multilateralism Leads to Inaction or Morally Objectionable Outcomes – Israel Proliferator, not Iran and North Korea
- Force Changes Circumstances that Define Problems – Russia advances in Near Abroad, Iran expands in ME, China amasses military power (and gains from North Korea?)

Getting Mix Right

- Bush was right to see terrorism as moral issue requiring use of force (chess match) but wrong to neglect diplomatic follow-up (jigsaw puzzle)
- Obama overplays diplomacy (jigsaw puzzle) and leaves US undefended, “a paper tiger” (chess match)
- Polk and Reagan got mix right
- Romney has more of a chess match view of the world