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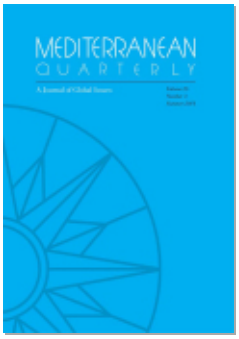

Mediterranean Quarterly, Volume 23, Number 2, Spring 2012, pp. 64-76 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

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Walter W. Hill

There is a well-known and perhaps worn-out truism in US mythology about foreign policy, namely, that partisan differences end at the water's edge. In this essay I reexamine long-held assumptions about "nonpartisan foreign policy," using evidence from the 2008 US presidential contest. To be sure, earlier assumptions were anchored in theories of international relations that, frankly speaking, have dominated our discourse for far too long.

The classical realist international relations theory, developed by Hans Morgenthau, worked well in highly conflictual situations, such as during wars or in their aftermath. Morgenthau's work was published in a tense era, shortly after World War II and at the onset of the Cold War. However, alternatives to his theory did not appear until the mid-1970s, when neoliberalism and later constructivism started competing for attention with their explanatory approaches to international behavior. Other theories arose simply as reminders of the inability of the classical theories to predict wars or even the end of the Cold War.

Most contemporary theories, such as neorealism and neoliberalism, assume the existence of a global system based on the nation-state whose sole objective is to maximize security and protect vital national interests. Yet we know that internally the state is composed of multiple actors, interacting in ways that may be at cross-purposes with each other, political parties and interest groups being the most prominent among them. Complicating matters further for the United States is the historical presence of isolationist ideology, whose adherents see the world differently than liberal internationalists. Regardless of which strain dominates the public debate about US foreign

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Mediterranean Quarterly 23:2 DOI 10.1215/10474552-1587865

policy, the fact remains that there is no neat separation between domestic issues and international factors in the formulation of foreign policy, no matter how hard the "foreign policy establishment" tries to ignore Gabriel Almond's seminal 1950 work, *The American People and Foreign Policy*. Yet it took another forty years for another attempt to link the two. Like Almond in the 1950s, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita argues that knowing the "pull and tug" of domestic affairs is critical to understanding foreign policy. But de Mesquita adds another wrinkle to the domestic linkages of foreign policy. In his view, leaders are interested in their personal welfare, which may or may not coincide with the interests of the state.[1]

Here I should examine what factors shaped the current administration's policy in Afghanistan. A comprehensive review of statements and evidence suggests that the increase in troops in Afghanistan under the Barack Obama administration can be better explained by domestic political considerations than by events on the ground. Specifically, the "surge" of ground troops was publicly explored and supported within the Democratic primaries during a highly dynamic period and before any thorough strategic review by commanders in the field. The policy ultimately adopted may be best explained, in this case, by the desire of candidates to win the primaries and later the general election rather than by events in that distant Asian country.

Differences between issues articulated and believed during a campaign and those that influence governing are not new. One might recall a classic case during the 1960 presidential campaign, when Senator John F. Kennedy spoke about a "missile gap" between the United States and the Soviet Union. US armaments, the senator claimed, were inferior to the Soviets'. In retrospect, this startling revelation had a specific objective: to erase worries that a Democrat would be insufficiently anticommunist and stingy on defense spending. Such perceptions could have doomed the senator's chances in the primaries as well as the general election. But once he assumed the presidency he discovered, not only that this gap did not exist, but that the United States was in fact ahead of the Soviets in all categories of weapons. Nevertheless, he proceeded with the appointment of Air Force general Curtis LeMay and charged him with closing the imaginary "missile gap" and reestablish

1. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics: People's Power, Preferences, and Perceptions* (Washington, DC: CQ, 2000).

the unquestionable superiority over the Soviets. It was a clear instance of campaign rhetoric for a domestic audience shaping a major foreign policy reorientation, which caused the frightening arms race between the two blocs. In 2008 we also have a case of campaign pressures resulting in a foreign policy position that did not consider the actual policy situation but depended, rather, on domestic factors.

Preprimary Position of Candidates

Foreign Affairs invited and published essays defining the foreign policy positions of the major presidential candidates in the months before the 2008 primaries. Obama's essay, like almost all those written by the other presidential candidates, makes little mention of Afghanistan. Instead Obama focused his attention on the war in Iraq and the Middle East in general. No doubt the Middle East is an important region, but Obama went out of his way to appear not to have any issues with any religious sect. In fact, he wanted to reach out to Muslims both domestically and internationally. The Bush administration had once used the word *crusade* to describe counterterrorism policy—a term that offended many—and Obama saw exploitable electoral opportunities in its use by a Republican president. In fairness we must also note that other essays in the journal, such as those by senators Hillary R. Clinton and John McCain, similarly do not mention Afghanistan, or at best mention it in passing.[2]

One can surmise from his essay that in 2007 Obama's foreign policy objectives in the region were focused primarily on Iraq and finding a resolution to that war. At best, events in Afghanistan were on the back burner as a campaign issue. That country was overshadowed by China as a dominant economic power and by European affairs as well as development issues in the rest of the world. The essay was hardly what one would have expected if he was contemplating an escalation of the war in that state. So, what was the spark for moving the Afghan war more to center stage?

Senator Clinton's early vocal support of the war in Iraq was an irritant to

2. Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2007); see note 21 for other candidate essays. See also de Mesquita, 2. Bueno de Mesquita notes the importance of domestic affairs, and claims more generally that policy is driven by the personal welfare of the leader and the desire of the leader to stay in power.

liberal Democratic activists.[3] There clearly have been strong friends of the military among recent Senate Democrats (among them Sam Nunn of Georgia and Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington), but Democratic activists and primary voters tend to lean left on issues of war and peace.[4]

Senator Clinton's Expectations

Clinton expected to be the clear winner after Super Tuesday primaries. Arthur C. Paulson, in his essay in *Winning the Presidency in 2008*, quotes Clinton as saying, "I'm in it for the long run. It will be over February 5." The nomination process is "front loaded" for both major parties.[5] The conventional wisdom is that winners in the early primaries and caucuses have a big advantage and shorten the process. Rudy Guiliani's attempt in 2008 to wait out the first several weeks resulted in failure, although perhaps a one-issue candidate did not have a chance in any scenario. Note that John McCain's liability in 2000 was that he did not have support from other party leaders, which in turn meant he could not convert early successes into momentum. Similarly, Bill Bradley spent a lot of time in the Hawkeye state in 2000 and did poorly in the first caucus in Iowa, competing against Al Gore. The latter had support from traditional Democratic groups.

Clinton's expectations were reasonable given previous nomination cycles. Take 2004, for example. The large bloc of primaries on Super Tuesday was conducted on 2 March. After 3 February 2004, Democrat John Kerry carried five of seven events, and he was treated by the media as the likely nominee. After Super Tuesday, Kerry had won nine of ten states, including Georgia, a state that his competitor John Edwards, as a Southerner, needed to win. The exception was Vermont, which as expected voted for Howard Dean, who subsequently dropped out. Both

3. John A. Gans Jr., "The Democratic Primaries," in *The 2008 Elections: A Story in Four Acts*, ed. Eric Jones and Salvatore Vassallo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Gans cites Kathleen Tumulty, "How Obama Did It," *Time*, 5 June 2008, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1812049,00.html. After a debate in 2007 that didn't go well for Obama, he said, "We have a plan, stick with it."

4. Gans, 21.

5. Arthur C. Paulson, "The 'Invisible Primary' Becomes Visible: The Importance of the 2008 Presidential Nominations, Start to Finish," in *Winning the Presidency, 2008*, ed. William J. Crotty (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2009), 87. He also says there was little ideological difference in the Democratic candidates, resulting in their typically trying to distinguish themselves over minor features.

Kerry and President George W. Bush won the number of delegates needed to win their nominations on the same date, 9 March, the earliest date ever.[6]

In 2000 no incumbent was running, although the Democrats had an heir apparent. Even though there had been large fields in the two major parties, both Bradley and McCain, the two remaining challengers, withdrew on Thursday, 9 March 2000, two days after Super Tuesday.[7] In fact, since the adoption of multiple primaries several decades ago, the nominations have in fact been determined relatively early in the election cycle, making party conventions coronation events.

Early Primaries 2008

Let us turn to the 2008 cycle. Obama, to the surprise of many, won the Iowa caucus, showing that he could get support from rural white voters. He was also supported to a great extent by younger participants in the state.

The second test was in New Hampshire, which Senator Clinton won. Former president Bill Clinton was unimpressed with the Illinois senator and declared him "the biggest fairy tale I've ever seen."[8] There were four states with contests before the set of elections on Super Tuesday of 5 February: Nevada, South Carolina, Michigan, and Florida. The last two states were simply straw polls on the Democratic side, and Obama did not bother to have his name on the ballot in Michigan. South Carolina's contest was considered the most important, and Obama won it. Two days later, Obama picked up Senator Ted Kennedy's endorsement, while former senator John Edwards dropped out on 30 January 2008 and in so doing reduced the contest on the Democratic side to two candidates.[9]

There were thirteen states in play on Super Tuesday. Obama won a majority of nine of those states, but Clinton won the larger industrial states of Califor-

6. Barry C. Burden, "The Nominations: Technology, Money and Transferable Momentum," *The Elections of 2004,* ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ, 2005), 30–1.
7. William G. Mayer, "The Presidential Nominations," in *the Elections of 2000: Reports and Interpretations*, ed. Gerald M. Pomper (Washington, DC: CQ, 2001), 29.
8. "Conventional Wisdom," *Newsweek*, 21 January 2008, 33.
9. Fallout from the campaign remains several years later. Reports in the summer of 2011 note Edwards must pay $2 million to the US Treasury because of the misuse of campaign funds. Edwards was indicted in 2011. He was alleged to have misused over $900,000 to conceal a personal relationship. The revelation of that relationship would have destroyed his campaign. See Katharine Q. Seelye "Edwards Charged with Election Finance Fraud," *New York Times*, 4 June 2011, A1.

nia, Massachusetts, and New York. Barry C. Burden, in an essay titled "The Nomination Technology," argues that Clinton strategist, Mark Penn, mistakenly assumed a winner-take-all rule was used to determine delegates. The New York senator had miscalculated what was needed to win.[10]

On 9 February Obama won in Louisiana, Nebraska, and Washington, and the next day he won the Maine caucus. Clinton, seeing danger ahead, replaced campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle with Maggie Williams.[11] In hindsight, there was a change in Clinton's political strategy around this time, particularly on issues concerning foreign policy.

On 12 February Obama won the Potomac primaries of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, securing a delegate lead by mid-February. The Illinois senator ran up a string of eleven victories, benefiting from the support of key constituencies: African Americans and younger, well-educated, and independent voters. Clinton was winning women, white workers, Latinos, and seniors. The rules used to determine delegates were crucial. The Democrats used a proportional rule for adding delegates: candidates receiving over 15 percent of the vote in a state would receive some of that state's delegates. The Republicans generally used a winner-take-all rule. That means a Democratic candidate could lose the primary but collect almost as many delegates as the winner.[12]

If there is any truth to the existence of momentum, on Wednesday, 20 February, after winning Wisconsin, Obama had it. Interestingly, the Illinois senator was soon to run right into a brick wall. In the next week Clinton introduced the famous "3 a.m. phone call" political ad, which raised the question of Obama's foreign policy and defense experience. It aired in the last week of February in Texas, just before that state's primary.[13] The point of the ad was to raise doubts about Obama's ability to respond to or manage a national crisis. In this context Senator Clinton was also raising issues about Obama's lack of experience and

10. Burden, 36. A contemporary headline is pretty clear: Jeff Zelney and Jennifer Steinhauer, "Clinton Wins Nevada Caucuses, but Second-Place Obama Takes More Delegates," *New York Times*, 20 January 2008, 16.
11. Ibid.
12. See Erik Jones and Salvatore Vassallo, Prologue, in *The 2008 Presidential Elections*; Gans, 31; Stephen J. Wayne, "When Democracy Works: The 2008 Presidential Nominations," *Winning the Presidency 2008*.
13. Burden, 39; Chris Cillizza, "The 3 a.m. 'Phone Call' Ad," *Washington Post*, 29 February 2008.

in so doing linked domestic and foreign policies. The slogan "Foreign policy differences stop at the water's edge" no longer had any meaning.

Further pushing Afghanistan in the news, the *New York Times* on 24 February 2008 reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had made a trip there. Reporters on the trip were not told where they were going before departure. In that context, the *Times* reported, Obama saw an opportunity to reiterate a known position and criticize his opponents for supporting the wrong war. Further, following the Clinton campaign and with a dateline in Waco, Texas, the *Times* reporter wrote that Hillary Clinton "implied" she would boost military action in Afghanistan. Seizing on Clinton's new militarism, the apparent Republican nominee, Senator McCain, joined the fray by attacking his likely opponent in the fall elections, Obama, on issues of leadership. The road for such an attack was paved by Clinton, but that did not make it any less partisan.[14]

The Afghanistan issue entered into the national contest when it became clear that Clinton's original strategy had failed and her campaign was running out of money. Unexpectedly finding herself as the underdog in a protracted contest, she searched the horizon for any weakness, foreign or domestic, in Obama's camp. The Illinois senator had performed as well as anyone could have expected, picking up delegates at a clip that made it appear that he would win the nomination and was safe to respond in kind to the criticism of foreign policy immaturity. He began to raise the Afghanistan issue prominently, saying he would increase US troops committed to the country and kept hammering Clinton for her support of the "wrong war."

An additional indication that the Obama campaign gave Afghanistan a low priority can be seen from its infrequent reference by Obama in the campaign or elsewhere. The *New York Times* index for 2007 gives Obama about two-thirds of a column, slightly over four hundred citations, of which only two are on Afghanistan (23 July 2007 and 7 August 2007). In 2008 the index gives two-and-one-sixth columns under the title Obama, in which there are twenty-five

14. Katharine Q. Seelye, "Clinton Talks about Stepping Up Effort in Afghanistan," *New York Times* online, 29 February 2008, thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/29/Clinton-talks-about-stepping-up-effort-in-afghanistan. Clinton "further questioned Senator Barack Obama's readiness to serve as commander-in-chief." Later, "her audience . . . applauded her every time she took a swipe at Mr. Obama," but when she mentioned Afghanistan, "the applause meter dropped."

Afghan references. The first reference is 24 February 2008. (The 2006 Index for Obama is short, but does include references to France, Iraq, Kenya, and Sudan. There are no references to Afghanistan that year.)

The issue "Afghanistan" was elevated without any unusual event occurring in that Asian country at the time. Rather, it was raised for domestic electoral political reasons. Clinton was looking for an issue with which to attack her opponent, but Obama, it turns out, was taking a position that might appeal outside of the core group that was supporting him. He had attracted liberal activists by regularly reminding them that he, not his opponents, had opposed the Iraq war, hoping to camouflage his support for an increase in troops and, therefore, the intensity of the war in Afghanistan. By mixing the two he was able to gain support from the more conservative Democratic voters, a group that was hardly enthusiastic about the brash senator from Illinois.

For most of the month of March the Democratic nomination was melodramatic. Foreign policy issues were discussed but almost always in terms of military deployments, while high-profile domestic issues entered the campaign with greater intensity. Arguably the most memorable issue had to do with Obama's pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, although we need not expand the discussion on Wright here.

Writing the day before the Texas primary and published the morning of the primary on Tuesday, 4 March 2012, Elizabeth Bumiller and John M. Broder observed there was a battle over foreign policy, the issue being the Democratic candidates' commitment to send US troops to Afghanistan. The Clinton campaign, with just twenty-four hours before the start of voting in Ohio and Texas, hoped to deflect attention from Clinton's support of the Iraq war: again, a major defense-foreign policy issue intruded into an electoral agenda.[15]

On 4 March Clinton and Obama split Rhode Island and Vermont, but Clinton won the popular vote in Texas. Obama, however, won the evening Texas caucuses, significantly diminishing his opponent's luster. Obama lost Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana, yet he picked up delegates from all of those states. The implication was that the introduction of the

15. Elisabeth Bumiller and John M. Broder, "Democratic Rivals Clash before Pivotal Primaries," *New York Times*, 4 March 2008.

"3 a.m. phone call" did blur domestic and foreign policy issues but did not have the intended consequences, the reasons being that Obama was successful in "domesticating" a foreign policy issue and reaped the advantages of his anti-Iraq war position and his pro-middle-class domestic agenda.

There was a six-week break until 22 April, the date of the Pennsylvania primary. That allowed other issues to fester. On 11 March Obama defended himself against claims that he was naive in global affairs. In response to a question about whether, in the first month of a presidency, he would be willing to talk to Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korean, he responded, "I would." In its history, the United States has met and talked with many unsavory characters, Stalin, Mao, and even Castro among them.

Questions arose about Reverend Wright and, by extension, of Obama as well. In response to questions surrounding the controversy the senator made a speech on race.[16] The 19 March speech in Philadelphia highlighted his background and was well received. The speech helped solidify Obama's support among liberals.

In April Senator Clinton pulled another rabbit out of the hat by proposing suspension of the gas tax. Energy policy has a foreign component, but that component appeared only indirectly here. Obama rejected this proposal, calling it "an election year gimmick." This was seen as a turning point by Eric Jones and Salvatore Vassallo, as Clinton had hoped to climb back into the race with wins in Indiana and North Carolina.[17]

The pattern of few foreign affairs issues returned in the general election. William J. Crotty identified the major issue areas in the competition between Obama and McCain: financial crisis, taxes and government spending, Iraq and Afghanistan, healthcare, and energy. Clearly only one of the issues is explicitly in the domain of foreign policy.[18]

16. Gans, 34, who also includes the comment that opponents saw Obama as naive.
17. Jones and Vassallo.
18. William J. Crotty, "Electing Obama: The 2008 Presidential Campaign," in *Winning the Presidency 2008*, 36–7.

Early 2008 in Afghanistan

The history of Afghanistan goes back to antiquity. Its more recent history starts with the kingdom established in 1747. The country continued to be the site of the "great game" for dominance between the British and Russians lasted until Afghanistan gained full independence in 1919. Since the Soviet invasion in 1979 the country has been in a state of war, a period of roughly thirty years. The continual state of war had not been a feature of the past history of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan became an issue among the Democratic candidates mid-February 2008. The appearance of this foreign policy item is explainable by Senator Clinton's string of losses and her change in campaign manager. As stated, no particular event in Afghanistan accounted for this sudden shift in rhetoric and positions, but the implications for a long-standing American "myth" are strong. "Differences end at water's edge" has all but been demolished.

In fact, data on activity in Afghanistan show a lull early in 2008. There are interesting charts by Michael O'Hanlow and Hassina Sherjian that show that military activity during January and February 2008 was down from its peak in the preceding summer. Their charts include insurgent attacks on Afghan security force fatalities, British fatalities, and civilian casualties. Insurgent attacks, for example, were about four hundred in January and February, down from a peak of fourteen hundred in the summer of 2007. The data typically cover three successive years, including 2008. The counts generally peak in the summer and then decrease at the beginning of each year. In that context, February and March 2008 show "normal" levels of casualties for those months and a low number of casualties relative to the peaks in later and summer months. This is consistent with the claim that there was nothing unusual happening in Afghanistan to trigger its new-found interest in the campaign in February 2008.[19]

Michael O'Hanlow and Hassina Sherjian identify policy objectives previously receiving bipartisan support as the following: denying al Qaeda a sanctuary and preventing Pakistan extremists from using Afghanistan as a sanctuary. With a review of the public discussion, there is nothing suggesting that policy

19. Michael E. O'Hanlow and Hassina Sherjian, *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 130–9.

was about to change in February or March of 2008. Similarly, William Maley's later review of events bypasses February 2008, suggesting that little noteworthy occurred, but identifies events later in the year as noteworthy. Of importance was the 27 April attempted assassination of President Hamid Karzai. The attack occurred at a commemoration of the overthrow of Soviet-installed Najibullah regime by the Mujahedeen. By August, Maley notes, Karzai's concern with the number of civilian casualties became a noteworthy issue. These events occurred after rather than before Afghanistan's rise as a salient issue in the campaign in early February.[20]

Background and Summary

As noted earlier, *Foreign Affairs* gave candidates an opportunity to articulate their views of world politics before primaries and caucuses were in full swing. Senator Obama expressed strong interest in the Middle East and in eliminating terrorism and stated his goal of reducing nuclear weapons. Other objectives received passing mention. In hindsight, his stated concerns to a great extent mirror what in fact happened once he was in office. He saw US involvement in Iraq as a mistake, but he was in favor of increasing the overall size of the military. Clearly this was not a policy of opposition to the use of military force. In the essay, Afghanistan appears in one paragraph. It was linked to Pakistan and called for the United States to "act quickly, judiciously, and decisively" to end sanctuaries and deal with bin Laden. It is hard to conclude that such a statement in a major essay was a recommendation for a troop surge that could last several years.[21]

20. William Malay, *The Afghan Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 265. Malay is highly critical of reporting, saying that it simply repeats official US pronouncements that, in one instance, a crackdown is needed by the Afghan government and, in another, that Karzai is a failed leader if he cracks down. The criticisms may be correct, but one can't tell from the reports. Regarding the attempted overthrow, see Carlotta Gall and Abdul Waheed Wafa, "Karzai Escapes Attack in Kabul by Gunmen," *New York Times*, 28 April 2008. Viewing Afghanistan for aims elsewhere is not new. Defending US support of forces opposed to the pro-Soviet government and the ensuing instability, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski is quoted as saying, "What is most important . . . some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe . . . ?" See David Wildman and Phyllis Bennis, *Ending the US War in Afghanistan* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch, 2010), 56.

21. Senator Clinton's references in *Foreign Affairs* to Afghanistan are (1) "our brave soldiers who are wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq must receive the healthcare, benefits, training, and support they deserve," and (2) "The Taliban cannot be allowed to regain power in Afghanistan . . . [and the

There were hints early in the primary season that Afghanistan was under consideration as an electoral issue. This is not a surprise given the fact that a war was in progress. What might be surprising is that the references were rare on the stump. One of the few references was on 25 January 2008, roughly a month before Afghanistan came into focus in the campaign. On that day, Senator Obama's foreign affairs advisor, Denis McDonough, said the candidate would add two brigades on that front. An increase of this size is hardly a major change in troop strength.[22]

So we are left with the conclusion that Afghanistan came up in the context of the campaign just like any other issue without any consideration of events on the ground. The evidence suggests that Afghanistan and its problems probably would not have been an issue had not Senator Clinton faltered in the early contests and leap-frogged into the criticism of Obama's supposed drawbacks as a leader and commander-in-chief. It was Clinton's critical need to find some area—any area—in which Obama was weak. For Obama, adopting a conservative position on the war gave him a chance to gain support among Democrats who were likely Clinton backers. He also may, of course, have been looking to stake out a conservative position with an eye to the general election with McCain as the likely candidate. Furthermore, the Illinois senator could have been looking to deflect concern that he was against the use of the military.

The policy adopted by Obama after he became president may well have been the correct policy in Southern Asia. The capture and killing of bin Laden, for example, is widely seen as an indication that his policy has been successful. But the impetus for the policy appears to be a response to pressures in the

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government must] enable women to play a role in society." See Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-first Century," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2007). Senator Edwards's comments are general. See John Edwards, "Reengaging the World," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 5 (2007). But Senator McCain has very specific recommendations, including increasing NATO force. See John McCain, "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2007).

22. Note, for example, that Bob Woodward's book *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010) starts after Obama was elected and makes little reference to the electoral campaign, as if little practical thought was given to the matter before the election. Most analyses of the electoral campaigns, even those that are book length, virtually ignore Afghanistan. See John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama, McCain and Palin and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010). These authors make three references to Afghanistan. One is to a trip Clinton made in 2007 (to show her security credentials). The second is to Obama's overseas trip after securing enough delegates to win the nomination. The third refers to a tutoring session Palin received to prepare for the autumn campaign.

campaign. Increasing troops essentially started as a campaign promise, but it also can be seen as a response to the changing fortunes in the primaries as well as on the battlefield. Once Obama was in office, US policy in Afghanistan was reviewed, and the commitment to increase troops can be explained as a decision consistent with his electoral promises. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the context in which the policy rose into public prominence. What we see is that the policy is consistent with our theoretical framework that leaders take foreign positions driven by domestic considerations. Whether this should be viewed as the end of a US doctrine of separation of foreign policy from domestic considerations is hard to predict, given the globalization of information and the proliferation of ethnic politics that have driven actions and policies during the past forty years.