

A black and white photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium. He is smiling and looking to his right. In the background, a large, out-of-focus portrait of his face is visible.

for the **PRIORITIES** Next President

SAIS's respected faculty of scholars and practitioners bring impressive professional experience in government and the private sector to the classroom. In addition to teaching, they advise leaders, conduct research, publish influential books and contribute commentary. So, as *SAISPHERE* was being written prior to the November presidential election, the editors asked the school's academic program directors to assess the top priority for the incoming president as related to their field of study. Their responses offer a preview of President-elect Barack Obama's international affairs in-basket.



Succeed in Iraq

Ambassador Ryan Crocker, our envoy in Baghdad, put it best: “In the end, how we leave, and what we leave behind, will be more important than how we came.” The American project in Iraq can’t be allowed to fail. It is fundamental to the peace of that “Greater Middle East.” We must also retain the best of President George W. Bush’s “diplomacy of freedom”—the belief that Arabs and Muslims don’t have tyranny in their DNA. Americans may differ in their reading of Bush, but in the Arab and Islamic world, he leaves behind a commendable legacy: the willingness to bet on freedom, the belief that our pact with autocracy in that region has not served us well. In Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon, the American effort has not been in vain.

Fouad Ajami

Director of the Middle East Studies Program

Reduce Foreign Oil Consumption

The most important goal in foreign policy for the new president is to reduce American consumption of oil so as to reduce the revenues accruing to the governments of Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, which use those revenues for anti-American purposes. Reducing oil consumption requires raising its price in order to promote conservation and the substitution of alternative fuels. Since both presidential candidates have promised lower, not higher, oil prices, neither seems likely to do much to achieve this goal.

Michael Mandelbaum

Director of the American Foreign Policy Program

Bring Back Diplomacy and Statecraft

Sandwiched between the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the intervention of Russia into Georgia in 2008 is a peculiar interval of history in which the struggle to defeat terrorism, nuclear proliferation and illiberalism seemed to unite nations in a single concert cajoled by the United States. The new president will face a much tougher set of issues: Old splits among governments will reopen. New rivalries will enliven conflict. Oil politics will drive fear into the public. Moreover, the United States must cope with the deformations that have debilitated its economy. Relatively, the new president will possess fewer material resources to deal with these emergent contests. Skill in statecraft will never have been more of a requirement for American leadership.

Charles F. Doran

Director of the Global Theory and History Program

Lead on Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest collective action problem the world has ever faced. The Kyoto Protocol was meant to address it, but Kyoto has not worked. The United States rejected Kyoto but did not propose an alternative. The world is waiting for an alternative. It is waiting for U.S. leadership.

Scott Barrett

Director of the International Policy Program

Fix the Economy

With the decline of U.S. real estate prices, growing residential mortgage defaults and the resulting ongoing unprecedented crisis in the financial markets with its potential for increased U.S. government indebtedness and a worldwide slowdown, one can only think of Bill Clinton’s famous 1992 election line, “It’s the economy, stupid!”

Gordon Bodnar

Director of the International Economics Program

Re-engage With Africa

Africa will present major challenges and significant opportunities for the next administration. Problems of security, humanitarian need, poverty and poor governance will continue to demand international efforts and resources. The region's increasingly strategic position in global energy markets and the continuing urgency of the HIV/AIDS pandemic claim special attention from Washington. At the same time, Africa's emerging markets hold considerable promise, and prospects for democratic development remain encouraging in a number of countries. While the United States has dramatically increased aid to Africa in recent years, our political and economic influence has receded. The forthcoming administration will face the challenge of enhancing our political engagement with the continent and renewing our support for governance and economic change.

Peter M. Lewis

Director of the African Studies Program

Prepare to Compete With China

Reform in China requires reform in America. China's growing economic and intellectual strengths necessitate an increase in U.S. capacities to keep ahead on the treadmill of globalization. A United States that fails to boost its own capacities will feel threatened by a successful China, overmilitarizing what should be primarily an intellectual and economic competition. The best way for Americans to be confident in their relationship with China is to make progress at home and win friends abroad.

David M. Lampton

Director of the China Studies Program

Control Nuclear Weapons

The next president faces critical situations of nuclear weapons in the hands of unstable political regimes in Iran, North Korea and Pakistan. Controlling crises requires solid coalition-building (with Russia and Europe, China and the Middle Eastern states), as well as first-class intelligence capability and operational planning. The U.N. Security Council can provide a bully pulpit. But the United States and its allies have consistently underestimated the scale and sophistication of cooperation among reckless or rogue regimes.

Ruth Wedgwood

Director of the International Law and Organizations Program

Forge a New Transatlantic Partnership

Relations between Europe and the United States have deteriorated badly over the past decade. Neither is responding adequately to the demands of a rapidly changing world. In many aspects, each has been defeating the other. Both are caught in nostalgia and admiration of past achievements. The United States, which is severely weakened, needs to reduce its hegemonic pretensions in Europe and develop a real transatlantic partnership. Before this happens, Europe must define and assert its own interests more forcefully and effectively, particularly with Russia and the Middle East. The price of failure will be high on all sides.

David Calleo

Director of the European Studies Program

Promote Peace Between Israel and the Palestinians

Considering the many conflicts around the world that have received insufficient attention during the U.S. preoccupation with Afghanistan and Iraq, it is hard to identify one that has the highest priority. However, when forced to choose, it seems evident that serious efforts to resolve the longstanding conflict between Israel and the Palestinians are most critical, especially considering the relative lack of attention given to it since 2000. A solution will not be sufficient to bring peace and stability to the troubled Middle East. And progress in this direction will be difficult, if not impossible, in the absence of a just settlement of this most serious protracted dispute. This issue thus must receive very urgent priority from the next administration.

P. Terrence Hopmann

Director of the Conflict Management Program

Build Bridges to 'Responsible' Western Hemisphere Nations

The new Western Hemisphere issues for the next administration will be the old issues: the drug cartels, free trade, relations with Cuba, and how to respond to the rise of so-called populist governments in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Hopefully, the administration will focus on building bridges to the "responsible" regimes in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay, and selectively in Central America and the Caribbean, to support economic integration and poverty reduction initiatives.

Riordan Roett

Director of Western Hemisphere Studies and the Latin American Studies Program

Renew the Strategic Relationship With Japan

Crucial priorities for the incoming administration in relations with Japan will include broadening trans-pacific dialogue on social and economic questions and developing a shared concept of national security. Joint projects in the energy and environmental area would also help reinforce bilateral relations with this important ally.

Kent Calder

Director of the Japan Studies Program

Restore U.S. Civilian Diplomatic and Development Capacity

Besides dealing with foreseeable problems like those with Afghanistan, Georgia, Iraq, Pakistan and Ukraine, the next president will have to figure out how to restore the civilian capabilities of the U.S. government and enable our country to better win hearts and minds abroad. This is important not just with respect to terrorism but as an anchor for American influence in the coming decade. And a new president will have to determine—in cooperation with other countries—how to re-regulate a rapidly evolving global financial system so it doesn't do so much damage to the rest of the world.

Francis Fukuyama

Director of the International Development Program

Strengthen Ties With Canada

Inside less than a month, the politics of North America has been turned upside down. Two new governments are coming to power, one in Canada, the other in the United States. Although the change of government in Canada amounts to more of a shuffling of the cards of administration than the American election, both must make good on their promises of change. The imperatives of energy can cement ties between Canada and the United States. Diplomatic challenges are on the horizon in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. By getting their own houses in order, Canada and the United States are now better able to meet these ordeals.

Charles F. Doran

Director of the Canadian Studies Program

Thread the Needle on Russian Relations

After an extended period of contraction and decline, Russia is reasserting itself on the international scene. The new White House team will have to decide whether to put the accent on resisting Moscow's new assertiveness in regions such as the Caucasus or cooperating with Moscow in areas such as Iran and Afghanistan.

Bruce Parrott

Director of the Russian and Eurasian Studies Program

Focus on Northeast and South Asia

Regardless of the election outcome, the next president of the United States will have spent significant time in Southeast Asia. Both are more likely than other recent presidents to travel to the area. That said, policy toward Southeast Asia will have less importance in the next administration than policy toward Northeast or South Asia. This is the way it has been for 20 years, and it is unlikely to change because Southeast Asia is relatively peaceful and prosperous and therefore does not merit the intense policy concentration it did during the Cold War.

Karl D. Jackson

Director of the Asian Studies Program and the Southeast Asia Studies Program

Move North Korea to the Front Burner

North Korea's nuclear program remains a serious challenge to our national security and to the international nonproliferation regime, demanding immediate attention from the new U.S. president. Past experiences amply demonstrate that only when the president commands a clearheaded and coherent strategy can he prevent the challenge from escalating into a crisis, and only then can it be turned into an opportunity to build stability and peace in the region.

Jae-Jung Suh

Director of the Korea Studies Program

Tailor Policies Toward India and Pakistan

The challenge facing U.S. policy toward South Asia is summed up in the titles of two recent books: *India: The Rise of an Asian Giant* and *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan and Afghanistan*. An incoming administration will therefore need to craft a differentiated regional policy. Policy toward Pakistan must reject the debilitating habit of pursuing the short term at the expense of the long term and of staking everything on particular individuals—it should engage with all elements in civil society and encourage accountability. With India, the new U.S. presidency will need to recognize India's autonomy as it acquires a growing array of global governance responsibilities while being prepared to assist in addressing India's internal problems. And the new president must be prepared not to duck some hard choices concerning where U.S. interests in the region lie.

Sunil Khilnani

Director of the South Asia Studies Program

Balance Afghanistan and Iraq

The new administration will have to balance the resources and presidential attention needed to confront a worsening situation in Afghanistan while continuing gains in stability in Iraq. The policy will face attempts by al Qaeda to frustrate these goals in both countries.

Thomas Keaney

Acting Director of the Strategic Studies Program