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Introduction: Why is Change so Hard?

Understanding Continuity in Barack Obama's Foreign Policy

Jack Holland

'The global war on terror is dead; long live "overseas contingency operations"'

(Burkemann 2009, also cited in Holland 2012: 173)

This book addresses a pressing, contemporary puzzle, which reflects enduring debates in the discipline of International Relations and the social sciences more generally. Why has a president elected on a platform of change pursued such a high degree of continuity in his foreign and security policy? The answer is neither simple nor clear-cut. To understand continuity in American foreign policy after 2008, it is necessary to consider Obama's role as a strategic agent and the challenging nature of the strategically selective context in which he operates. How should we conceptualise this context? Does it include relative American decline within the international system, an institutionalised 'War on Terror', *and* culturally deep-rooted discourses, established in the aftermath of September 11th 2001? How should we conceptualise Obama's ability to act within such a context, however understood? Has Obama, at times, actually opted for continuity, of his own volition? This book grapples directly with fundamental questions of change and continuity such as these, in its exploration

of US foreign policy during Barack Obama's first term in office, from January 2009 to January 2013.

For a President elected upon an apparent platform of change, the foreign policy of the forty-fourth president has demonstrated a surprising degree of continuity with that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. While many commentators will applaud this continuity (see, for example, Lynch and Singh 2008), with some going so far as to label Obama's foreign policy 'neoconservative' (Podhoretz 2010; Richman 2011), such continuity has been troubling and unexpected for many of Obama's supporters and less partisan, independent observers. Why then might Obama, elected on an apparent platform of change, have implemented a foreign policy that continued significant elements of his predecessor's? This book weighs up the possibilities that Obama: *declined* to implement greater change because he was ideologically opposed to it from the outset; *failed* to appreciate the demands of holding office whilst campaigning and adjusted accordingly once elected; and was structurally *limited* in the change that was possible. While the contributors to this volume find evidence for all of these explanations, the bulk of their arguments coalesce around the last. This book then, in large part, is an exploration of the structural limits to change for American foreign policy generally and associated political, social and economic disincentives to end the War on Terror specifically.

There is certainly truth in the notion that Obama spoke of far less extensive change than his supporters frequently and mistakenly heard (McCrisken 2011), and that on taking office, like all presidents, he quickly adapted from campaigning in poetry to governing in prose. However, his worldview and accounting for the realities of the

Oval Office tell only a small part of the story. Obama has been unable to institute greater change because of the enduring structures of the international system, War on Terror and the domestic cultural and political landscape within which he is located. These structures take a variety of forms, the most significant of which decrease in scale from: the relative material declining of American power; the institutionalised nature of the 'War on Terror'; and the hegemonic discourses of Terror that were established shortly after 9/11 and continue to be defended today (e.g. Boyle 2011; Croft 2006; Jackson 2011; Krebs 2005; Krebs and Jackson 2007; Krebs and Lobasz 2007; Holland 2012a, 2013; Holland and Jarvis 2013; Quinn 2011). This book brings some of these arguments together in order to highlight their competing understandings and explanations of continuity, as well as to reveal their significant and underappreciated areas of agreement.

In order to introduce contemporary debates on change and continuity in American foreign policy, including the contributions that follow, this introduction is structured in two principal parts. First, drawing on recent literature and the chapters that follow, the introduction asks a theoretical question – 'how can continuity in American foreign policy be understood?' – exploring the ways in which, in both international and domestic arenas, assessments of continuity and its drivers are contested. It is argued that Obama's mixed record of reorienting US foreign policy presents important implications for two enduring debates at the heart of the philosophy of social science: the relationship between structure and agency; and conceptualisations of time and temporality. Second, the chapter asks an empirical question – 'to what extent has there been change in American foreign policy under Obama?' Here, we consider Obama's foreign policy and counter-terrorism strategy substantively, in the areas of

war, intervention and nuclear weapons. Together, in bringing together theoretical and empirical explorations of volition and temporality in US foreign policy, the introduction and the book as a whole consider how we might think about and conceptualise change, both in the broadest sense, with implications for the social sciences and IR, as well as within Obama's foreign policy specifically.

OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY: UNDERSTANDING CONTINUITY IN THE WAR ON TERROR

How might we make sense of Obama – elected on an apparent platform of change – pursuing such a high degree of continuity with the foreign and security policy of the Bush Administration? Obama's mixed record on delivering change poses important questions, both for understandings of American foreign policy and for major debates in International Relations and the social sciences more broadly. Three options are explored here, the first of which can be understood as volitional and the final two as structural explanations of continuity. First, the argument is put forward that Obama was in fact consistent with his election rhetoric; the expectation of greater change arose through a willing mishearing on the part of his supporters. This argument represents Obama as the master of his own foreign policy, opting to steer a steady course for the United States. Second, several structural limits to change are presented, beginning with broadly neorealist and neoclassical realist arguments, stressing the declining relative material capability of the US in an increasingly multi-polar international system. To this, a range of broadly constructivist arguments are added, which explore how the institutionalisation of Bush-era policies has limited Obama's options. This institutionalisation focuses on the Bush-era ideas and

identities at the heart of the War on Terror, alongside their material and economic consequences. The result of this broadly critical constructivist argument is that Obama remains the victim of dominant discourses and a kind of cultural coercion, with the narrative deck stacked against the possibility of achieving greater change in American foreign and security policy.

Choice and Re-assessment: Obama as author of foreign policy continuity

The first explanation for continuity in American foreign policy under Obama is that he has in fact been consistent with ninety per cent of his election rhetoric; it was just misheard by some voters and especially ardent supporters. The argument, succinctly, is that Obama never intended nor promised wholesale reversal of Bush era foreign policy. In Chapter 1, Trevor McCrisken draws on his earlier work to make this point explicitly and persuasively:

> 'Those expecting wholesale changes to US counterterrorism policy … misread Obama's intentions. Obama always intended to deepen Bush's commitment to counterterrorism while at the same time ending the 'distraction' of the Iraq war'
>
> (2011: 781)

McCrisken argues that Obama's election rhetoric did not suggest ending the War on Terror and reversing Bush's foreign policy, but rather comprised of the twin aims to fight better and cleaner. These were 'strategic changes', rather than wholesale policy reversal (2011: 782). For McCrisken, while it is clear that Obama has gone through the realisation that all new presidents do – 'government is different from opposition' –

there are two compelling reasons that explain why Obama has opted – of his own volition – to deliver only 'faltering change' (2011: 781). First, 'Obama foreshadowed much of his programme in his pre-election speeches; yet audiences were selective in what they heard, displaying a strange kind of psychological dissonance. Second, few have appreciated how much the Bush strategy was quietly modified in the last three years before Obama's accession… Obama has adopted a counterterrorism strategy that is late-Bush rather than early-Bush. He has introduced some significant changes of his own, but even these were in the spirit of the adaptations that were already under way' (McCrisken 2011: 784). For McCrisken then, it is of little surprise that continuity is apparent; it should have been expected. And, moreover, where change has been pursued, it was usually with Bush, rather than Obama, that it originated.

On the first claim – that Obama was heard to talk of greater change than he actually promised – we can revisit the key foreign policy speeches of the campaign. 'While on the campaign trail, Obama portrayed himself as an antidote to the excesses of the Bush administration' (McCrisken 2011: 781). The word excess is important here. It was not that Obama promised to end the War on Terror, but instead pledged to rein back those most intrusive, ill advised and dangerous overreaches of an increasingly imperial presidency, founded upon the foreign policy of war in exceptional times. One, very plausible, possibility is that Obama's tendency to draw so frequently and intensely upon the language of change helped to generate the misleading assumption that wholesale change would be pursued on his election to the White House. For instance, in one campaign speech, at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington DC, Obama used the word 'change' on five times and the word 'new' no fewer than thirty-two occasions. A closer reading of his speech, however, reveals a far more limited

and nuanced policy position. Obama did insist, 'I am running for President of the United States to lead this country in a new direction' (Obama 2008). But the following line made clear that this was a strategy of fighting better and smarter; it was about correctly identifying and confronting threats, not delivering wholesale change: 'Instead of being distracted from the most pressing threats that we face, I want to overcome them' (Obama 2008). Obama benefited, however, from fostering a perception of change amongst voters that was greater than his actual intentions. From the early days of his campaign, he argued: 'I'm not running for President to conform to Washington's conventional thinking … I'm running to change our politics and our policy so we can leave the world a better place than our generation has found it' (Obama 2007).

While it is certainly true that some supporters heard a greater case for change than was actually delivered, in other areas it appears that Obama has outright failed to realise the change he did seek. His apparent inability to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, stands out as the clearest example of these failings. Obama was elected having campaigned to shut Guantanamo and, on taking office, signed executive orders for the detention facility's closure, as well as forbidding the use of torture by the United States. As David Cameron has recently remarked, Obama came to power and effectively hit the moral reset button on the policies and perceptions of the United States (Winnett 2012). Yet, with around one hundred detainees still at Guantanamo, Obama's promises of change have clearly been limited in their realisation. It appears that he has failed to reconcile the demands of fighting terrorism with the values and ideals of America, as he promised he would. How then might we

explain a volitional continuity that contradicts elements of Obama's campaign rhetoric, as well as the urgency of his initial actions on assuming the presidency?

One answer is that Obama has effectively reined himself in, as all politicians do, on making the transition from candidate, through President Elect, to Commander in Chief. As McCrisken (2011: 781) argues, 'his rhetoric has been reconstituted as his policy has been translated into action'. Having faced terrorist plots against his own inauguration and the 'Christmas Day plot' at the end of his first year in office, Obama's language became openly more martial, with talk of 'war' reminiscent of his predecessor (McCrisken 2011: 784). Appeals to 'war' and recollections of 9/11 as justification for the continuation of the campaign in Afghanistan increased in response to the 'near misses' of failed terrorist plots against the United States. This argument suggests that, on becoming president, Obama was gradually and increasingly converted to the cause and rationale of Bush-era counter-terrorism policy.

Contra Jackson (2011; and Chapter 4), McCrisken argues that the 'continuities in US counterterrorism do not indicate that Obama is trapped by Bush's institutionalized construction of a global war on terror so much as that he shares a conception of the imperative of reducing the terrorist threat to the US, as demonstrated by his pursuit and elimination of the Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden'. Obama's war against terrorism is 'in keeping with the assumptions and priorities of the last ten years'. And it is 'just as problematic' (McCrisken 2011: 781). According to this volitional argument, these policies and their problematic elements have come about because Obama chose them, either on the campaign trail, or on realizing how difficult change is to achieve, as he learned first hand the challenges of being President of the United

States. This choice was initially ideological, but has, in more recent times, arisen from the realities of American politics, the context of the moment and the Office, and the resultant re-assessment of the ends and means of pursuing the national interest.

Systemic Decline: The constraints of decreasing relative material capability

In Chapter 2, Adam Quinn argues that Obama's presidency is less defined by the difficulties of his adjustment to occupying the White House than his ability to reconcile foreign policy with long-term material decline. While Nicholas Kitchen, in Chapter 3, affords a greater role to individuals within the Obama administration, these are fundamental underpinning sentiments with which he wholeheartedly concurs; the importance of the 'pivot to Asia' in Obama's foreign policy evidences these inexorable trends. For both authors, the brute material fact that is the amount of power wielded by the United States serves as an inescapable reality confronting Obama as he decides how best to deploy it. For Quinn, the twin stories of American long- to mid-term decline and Obama's short-term policy options are happily complementary at present. The US is fortunate to possess a president aware of declining national power and adopting an outlook which accounts for that fact. In short, Obama is helping the United States to decline politely, in detaching America from prolonged struggles, leading from behind (Lizza 2010), establishing clear parameters to international involvement and attempting to prevent indefinite entanglements and overreach. This 'measured, cautious' approach to US foreign policy and the synchronicity it demonstrates with the cold, hard and potentially painful reality of relative material decline should be welcomed (see also Quinn 2011: 804). Kitchen, however, warns that aligning the United States' resources with new

strategic priorities will be a particularly difficult task over the coming years and decades.

From Paul Kennedy, through Kishore Mahbubani, to Fareed Zakaria, Quinn traces the intellectual history of American decline, which has today returned with a vengeance. The 'serious internal problems' of the United States, Quinn (2011: 806) argues, have been compounded by the 'strides… made by other nations'. A 'dire fiscal situation' will inspire a 'wasting' of military superiority (Quinn 2011: 807; Krepinevich 2009). For the pessimistic (neo)realist then, the real debate is not whether the United States will experience relative decline or not, but rather on what timescale this decline will occur. As Quinn points out, even the most ardent defenders of America's supremacy tend to qualify their confident outlook with footnotes assuring the slow shift of power between states. For Quinn and Kitchen, the need for a miraculous and unforeseen invention to stave of this decline is a wilder bet than the extrapolation of declinist scholars (Quinn 2011: 810).

Obama's foreign policy, whether by happy coincidence or conscious choice, has necessarily been shaped by the shifting reality of American power. Stretched to capacity by fighting two consecutive wars, Obama has demonstrated caution, reluctance and even reticence in decisions to deploy America's armed forces. Obama's 'adoption of a strategy of restraint and circumspection in the use of American power' parallels the blunt and incontrovertible fact that American relative capability is in decline (Quinn 2011: 814). Obama pursues a balancing act in foreign policy, between doing enough and not too much. It is the Goldilocks approach (Miller 2012). His reaction to the Arab Spring was a case in point, as he tried 'to get

on the right side of historic political change', but understood 'that Washington's role and influence really aren't determinative anymore. Obama seems to understand intuitively that if you stand in the way of history's power you'll likely get run over by it'. He has therefore operated 'from the sidelines, supporting change in Egypt, Yemen, and Tunisia, precisely where America belonged' (Miller 2012). In Syria and Mali, we see these trends continue into his second term in office.

The arguments put forward in chapters 2 and 3 downplay the role of Obama's volitional desire to achieve change in the face of systemic shifts in the global distribution of power, which the War on Terror has made all too apparent through the quagmire in Iraq and difficulties of pursuing asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan. For Quinn and Kitchen it is the structural pressures of the international system that ultimately drive issues of change and continuity in American foreign policy, over and above the current occupant of the White House. Most recently, these systemic pressures have manifest in military reminders that the US cannot do everything, as well as inspiring the subsequent political pressures of public opinion, increasingly frustrated by the apparently intractable and futile campaigns of the War on Terror. For Quinn and Kitchen, then, where change might occur, it is most likely driven by structure, not agency, which will ultimately, and in turn, require a re-alignment of policy with power. In this task, Quinn applauds Obama's ability to work with rather than rage against the apparent dying of the light, and Kitchen notes the increased importance of American foreign policy and diplomacy in Asia, which necessarily relegates America's interests in the Greater Middle East.

Ideas, Identity and Institutionalisation: Dominant discourse and cultural coercion

Notwithstanding the 2008 financial crisis, American expenditure on the War on Terror has been nothing short of phenomenal. Official congressional estimates cost the War on Terror at over 1.5 trillion US dollars. The cost of running the detention facility at Guantanamo alone is enormous. Despite its promised closure, each of the facility's one hundred detainees continue to cost the United States $750,000 annually (Van Veeren 2012). And these figures focus only upon the public costs of fighting and detaining 'terrorists'. They do not account for the domestic expenditure on counter-terrorism efforts, nor the considerable sums of private money invested in fighting terror at home and abroad.

Alongside the eye-watering economics of fighting terror, perhaps it is the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security that best encompasses the reorientation of American government around the counter-terrorism effort. After 9-11, Bush promised a radical overhaul of American security architecture – analogous to Truman's gearing up to fight and win the Cold War – around the remodelled Department of Defense and National Security Council. These once-in-a-generation shifts can, unsurprisingly, require a generational timescale to revisit and alter. In 2002, Bush increased the budget for Homeland Security to $38 billion, as, after 9-11, 'terror' became 'the new organisational priority' in the United States (Croft 2006: 125). Croft argues persuasively that contained within the four aims of the new Department for Homeland Security was the clear sense that the country was at war, against an enemy prepared to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and against whom it was necessary to plan based on a worst-case analysis. As Richard Jackson

argues in Chapter 4, these underpinning assumptions of institutional reorganisation were vital. New spending and policy priorities enshrined their importance, helping to establish them as political truth. Their institutionalisation, through spending, policy reviews and new government departments, helped to minimise the possibility of their contestation, as they became sufficiently taken for granted to constitute a form of tacitly accepted, but barely acknowledged, background knowledge.

'The policy programme that followed from the war on terror … affected political, legal, economic and social aspects of life in the United States' (Croft 2006: 132). And importantly, as Croft (2006), Jackson (2005) and Holland (2012) have argued, it impacted on everyday life for many Americans. The publicity of frequent arrests of suspected terrorists located in America – the enemy within; the sleeper cell – helped to sustain a sense of perpetual and insidious threat. Institutionalisation, in short, played out at the micro level of everyday life for millions of Americans. Increased airport security measures, more strenuous visa checks, stricter immigration controls and new screenings for entering many public buildings, were just some of the range of counter-terrorism measures that American citizens funded, broadly supported, and were exposed to on a daily basis as a constant reminder of the terror threat.

The institutionalisation of the War on Terror, however, was it its most obvious, dramatic and impactful at the level of defence expenditure. First, the 2002 National Defense Authorisation Act raised and reoriented spending in order to fight the new threats of the War on Terror. Second, the 2003 budget, Bush proudly announced, marked 'the biggest increase in defense spending in twenty years' (Bush 2002). This refocusing of American efforts and finances around the effort to find, confront and

defeat 'terror', anywhere and everywhere, would prove very difficult to pull back from. Alongside the president and vice-president, Donald Rumsfeld was a key figure in this process, helping to ensure that America's armed forces were equipped to fight against today's terrorists rather than the Cold War foes of old. Rumsfeld justified the increasing cost of this programme against the impact of September 11th (see Croft 2006: 138). $378 billion dollars, Rumsfeld (2002) argued, whilst being a great deal of money, was an eminently sensible outlay, if the $170 billion estimated impact of September 11th was taken into account. Paul Wolfowitz (2002, cited in Croft 2006: 138) took this further still. Against the potential cost of a WMD attack, he insisted, such investment would appear cheap.

Obama is trimming the edges off of this institutionalised behemoth. He has, for example, worked to overhaul the colour-coded advisory system. It is, however, extremely difficult to curtail, let alone stop and reverse or redirect these gargantuan national security efforts. It is more akin to turning around a battleship than a car, albeit on a far greater order of magnitude. The fundamental orientation and mission of the key institutions of the War on Terror therefore remain very much in tact. They are geared up, in a fashion reminiscent of the 1960s Garrison State, to fight and win a war, against a new and lethal enemy. Of course, whether the lethality of this enemy is true *in reality* is up for debate. The institutionalisation of the War on Terror has been achieved on the back of an exceptional investment in the discourses that underpin it. This discursive construction, as well as underpinning the formulation and financing of the war effort, is deeply engrained in American political culture. It is sufficiently embedded to generate its own perpetual logic, alongside processes of fiscal and governmental institutionalisation.

Zalman and Clarke (2009: 110) have noted that, whilst campaigning for office, 'Obama's words and actions aimed to puncture the inflated drama that has characterized the dominant discourses of the War on Terror. Rather than a battle to the death between the forces of good and evil, the war was to become a human-sized conflict between a state pledged to act in accordance with agreed rules of warfare and a reasonably well-defined adversary'. And yet this was a premature obituary for the War on Terror and its Bush era excesses. Despite efforts to modify the underpinning language of the War on Terror, Zalman and Clarke go on to note that 'the basic contours of the original narrative, in which the United States conducts a worldwide campaign against a diverse collection of actors presumed to be united by a commitment to Islamic extremism, remains intact in key branches of the U.S. government'. Quinn (2011: 822-3) confirms that, despite initial attempts to move beyond reliance on binaries of good and evil, an analysis of Obama's presidential language 'does not by any means represent a radical break with the traditions of American foreign policy in the modern era. Examination of his major foreign policy pronouncements reveals that he remains within the mainstream of the American discourse on foreign policy'. This suggests two things. First, institutionalisation operates beyond policy directives and funding decisions; it includes discourse and narrative. In Chapter 4, Richard Jackson explores the 'ways in which the war on terror has been institutionalised in counterterrorism practices and institutions', as well as 'how it has been normalised and embedded in American popular culture' through the narratives of 9-11 and the 'negative ideograph of 'terrorism'' (see Jackson 2011: 390). Second, it suggests that the dominant discourses of the War on Terror are

sufficiently socially embedded such that they possess a self-perpetuating logic from which it is difficult to break free.

In Chapter 5, Michelle Bentley traces this rhetorical coercion, arguing that 'Obama cannot realistically implement any aspect of counter-terrorism policy in isolation of the culture of fear promoted by his predecessor. The frames and narratives of fear that he has effectively inherited limit him' (see also Bentley 2011). In order to achieve greater policy freedom, Obama is required to overcome or at least downplay these fears, but doing so risks projecting an image of a president who is 'soft' on issues of national security. As Bentley points out, narratives of fear are actually useful to Obama as he seeks to successfully implement his own vision of counter-terrorism strategy at home and abroad. However, Obama 'is incapable of constructing that fear however he wishes' (Bentley 2011); he remains trapped within the parameters of his predecessor's construction of 9-11 and the War on Terror, which have now been resonant and repeated for over a decade.

This strand of (critical) constructivism explores the extent to which 'counter-terrorism policy can be rewritten' by the Obama Administration, in view of the 'social and political construction of US counterterrorism policy' that has taken place 'since the onset of the war on terrorism' (Jackson 2011: 390). It argues that the 'cultural grammar expressed in the language of the war on terror' limits Obama's ability to achieve greater change in foreign and security policy, as well as potentially serving to limit his own desire for change. For Jackson, Obama's policy and language 'accords with the deep cultural grammar of American identity' and the now 'well-established ideograph' of the War on Terror. Succinctly, the argument suggests that the War on

Terror is underpinned by particular discourses, which have 'been institutionalised in American political practice and embedded in American culture', and from which it is particularly difficult to deviate.

Ron Krebs (e.g. 2005) has shown how foreign and security policy can become particularly dominant when its framings remove the discursive materials that potential opponents would require in order to formulate a socially sustainable counter-argument and alternative. Krebs and Lobasz (2009), for example, argue that, in late 2002, Congressional Democrats were rhetorically coerced such that they chose to swallow lingering doubts and opt to vote for intervention in Iraq. For Jackson and Bentley, in 2012, it is clear that these framings, alongside the political and cultural dynamics they have induced, continue to stack the debate in favour of Obama's political opponents. After assessing the biased discursive playing field, the Obama Administration has frequently chosen to modify, rather than overhaul, the fundamentals of a War on Terror that is founded upon an engrained, resonant and enduring set of discourses. The net result is the same in 2012 as it was in 2002; opponents of the War on Terror are left to contest relatively minor and procedural issues, leaving in tact the fundamental orientation of foreign and security policy.

In Chapter 6, Ty Solomon adds to this theme, arguing that the War on Terror is a particularly useful example of rhetorical coercion due to the frequent and intense use of the language of national identity and foundational values, as well as the affective investment of Americans in such framings. During the War on Terror, foreign policy has repeatedly been framed as more than simply something the state *does*; but rather, as helping to comprise what it is the state actually *is*. Framed as an essential

component of the national Self, it becomes extremely difficult to contest foreign policy; as to do so would readily be equated with challenging widely supported understandings of the national identity. Solomon's contribution is to reveal how American commitments to the language of the War on Terror are often intensely emotional, making its overhaul particularly difficult (see also Solomon 2012). Obama, perhaps more than any other, has faced accusations of a lack of patriotism. During the War on Terror, failing to support narratives of interventionism – in the name of freedom – have readily been equated with a lack of love for country and even as an indication of threat to the Homeland. During the War on Terror, the language of national identity and foundational values in foreign policy has helped to co-opt and curtail. The (critical) constructivist argument posits that Obama is yet to fully break free from this powerful coercive logic.

OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY: ASSESSING CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

When weighing the 'reality' of change in practical policy terms, findings often depend upon the particular sector of 'foreign and security policy' chosen for study. With this in mind, Obama's mixed record of implementing change can usefully and holistically be assessed through three areas in particular: his Administration's approach to nuclear weapons; counter-terrorism policy and in particular the use of unmanned aerial vehicles; and approaches to intervention and the use of force abroad.

"There is little doubt that the election of Barack Obama to the United States presidency generated tremendous optimism about the possibility of substantive change in US foreign and domestic policy, including the US-led global war on terror"

(Jackson 2011: 390). However, Obama's second term in office began with troops still stationed in Afghanistan: a war begun eleven years previously. With drawdown of troops scheduled for 2013 and potentially 2014, Obama ran his 2012 re-election campaign as a wartime president, just as his predecessor had done. However, Obama's major foreign policy positions – his calls on war and intervention – have demonstrated both continuity and change with those of George W. Bush.

As Mike Aaronson argues in Chapter 7, in policy terms, the starkest difference between the forty-third and forty-fourth presidents is clearly found in their respective views of the war in Iraq. Obama came to office opposing the 'dumb war', which he saw as diverting America's attention away from the area of the world in which its interests were most obviously engaged: the AfPak border region. Bush's premature declaration of 'Mission Accomplished' aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, whilst still not fully realised, has come closer during the Obama presidency, as American troops have returned home. The critique that some liberals, Democrats, isolationists and pacifists have launched is that these troops were, relatively quickly, redeployed to fight and die in the original '9/11 war' (Burke 2011) and the first front of the War on Terror.

Obama's commitment to the war in Afghanistan has been steadfast in comparison to his clear disdain for American involvement in Iraq. That disdain, however, did not prevent Obama from learning some of the lessons that the war in Iraq held for the future deployment of American force in fighting counter-insurgency. The success of the surge in Iraq was debated and deliberated for ninety days amongst Obama officials before finally it was adopted as a policy model designed to rescue the

Afghanistan mission through the restabilisation of the country. Deploying 30000 additional American troops, reinforced by an extra 10000 NATO troops, Obama agreed to raise total US troop levels to 100000, in an attempt to approximate the troop to territory ratio that had previously been seen to work for the British in Malaya and achieve partial stabilisation in Iraq, just as the conflict appeared to be veering out of control.

As Wali Aslam argues in Chapter 8, Obama has also reshaped the political and geographical imagination of the Afghanistan conflict. Viewing Pakistani cooperation warily, there has been no replication of the courting of General Pervez Musharraf conducted by Colin Powell and George Bush. In contrast, Obama has explicitly reconceptualised America's war to include Pakistani territory – in particular the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan, incorporating Tribal and Pashtun regions along the Afghan border. Obama's War on Terror, unlike Bush's, does not count or rely upon Pakistani assistance: it doubts it. Pakistan is viewed and treated as threat, not ally, in Obama's foreign policy. Pakistani officials are not informed of drone strikes against suspected terrorists within their borders, just as they were left naive of the operation to kill Osama bin Laden until after its successful conclusion. As Aslam points out, Obama's proclivity for the use of drones represents both change and continuity with the policy of the Bush Administration, who had ramped up their use from 2005 through to 2008 (Aslam 2011). What is new is the frequency of drone strikes under Obama and the significance and notoriety they have developed as high profile targets have been prioritized over concerns for civilian casualties.

The lessons of Afghanistan informed Obama's thinking as the events of the Arab Spring began to unfold. The shifting context of US-Middle East relations – from War on Terror to Arab Spring – brought Obama his own war. In Libya it was less immediately clear that the US national interest was best advanced through intervention. The intervention was pursued, in significant part, as a war of choice and altruism, rather than utmost necessity. It was initiated and legitimised, not by the United States but, principally, France and, to a lesser extent, Britain. It could not, however, have been successfully conducted without American support and assistance. Obama's policy, unofficially at least, was to lead from behind. There were some borrowed tactics, but the war was true to Obama's own preferred war-fighting style and foreign policy beliefs. A broadly Afghan Model was used to inform and support indigenous forces on the ground, backed by overwhelming air power. In contrast to his predecessor, Obama was always at pains to stress that there was zero possibility of American boots on the ground and that regime change was not an explicit goal of the intervention (Holland and Aaronson 2013). In Libya, Obama's desire to fight the good fight, and to fight it right, came together. Libya was about fighting for the right reasons, but paying a limited cost and bearing a limited burden (Quinn 2011: 819). It minimized the costs and risks to American life, by concentrating efforts on the lofty heights of exceptionalist rhetoric and American airpower. It was the ideal type intervention of a slowly solidifying Obama Doctrine.

In Chapter 9, Andrew Futter explores the Obama Administration's approach to nuclear weapons. Futter shows that, despite making considerable efforts to shift establishment thinking about nuclear weapons, a close inspection of Obama's first term approach to nuclear weapons reveals that many policy trajectories remain

broadly the same as those pursued by George W Bush. Standing out and alone, as almost unthinkable under the Bush administration, is Obama's 2009 Prague speech on nuclear disarmament. Initiatives in other areas of US nuclear policy reflect a surprising amount of continuity, for instance: the continuation of efforts towards strategic nuclear arms control with Russia and the signing of a New START Treaty, which follows on directly from the 2002 Moscow treaty agreed by the Bush administration; the broadening and formalising of proliferation control, such as the Bush era Proliferation Security Initiative and Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism; and the expansion of policies to diversify US deterrence options, designed to combat Iranian and North Korean nuclear threats. Therefore, while tactical shifts in the thinking behind nuclear policy have occurred – in the direction of reducing the utility of nuclear weapons – the strategic underpinnings of US nuclear strategy have not significantly altered from the path outlined and followed by the Bush administration.

It has been a similar story, of course, in the fight against terrorism at home, where Obama has opted to repeatedly renew and extend the legislation that frames efforts to counter the domestic terror threat. Obama has repeatedly renewed both the State of Emergency, which has been in place since the onset of the War on Terror on 14 September 2001, and the US Patriot Act, continuing the provision of sweeping powers for surveillance and wiretapping. Obama enables this provision, as a number of contributors to this volume make clear, through his decision to continue to employ the language used by his predecessor in describing the omnipresent threat that looms over the American nation. This comes despite what many commentators have hailed as Obama's greatest foreign policy achievement to date: the killing of Osama bin

Laden in Pakistan on 2 May 2011. Despite being met with an outpouring of jubilation in the United States, and acting as an invaluable political shield from Republican attacks, Obama has declined to frame bin Laden's death as the beginning of the end of the War on Terror. As Lee Jarvis notes in Chapter 10, while the event has contributed to the partial healing of a national wound, it has not come to mark a hard rupture in time from the inherited policies of George W. Bush and the War on Terror to those of Barack Obama and the Arab Spring.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book adopts a comparative approach, analysing change and continuity in US foreign policy during Barack Obama's first term in office vis-à-vis the foreign policy of the War on Terror, initiated by George W. Bush, following the events of September 11th 2001. The volume analyses the extent to which criticisms of continuity are correct, identifying how the failure to end the War on Terror is manifest and explaining the reasons that have made enacting change in foreign policy so difficult. The book, then, answers two principal questions: To what extent has Obama's foreign policy been characterised by change and/or continuity? And, how can continuity in US foreign policy since Obama's election be understood and explained?

In addressing these questions, contributions to this volume discuss continuity and change from a range of perspectives in International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis, which are broadly representative of a spectrum of theoretical positions. The book begins, in its first section and Chapter 1, with Trevor McCrisken's account of volitional continuity, whereby Obama is seen to choose to reshape rather than

overhaul the War on Terror. In Chapter 2, Adam Quinn considers systemic constraint in the form of relative American decline within the international system. In Chapter 3, Nicholas Kitchen explores economic and strategic re-alignment, through a broadly neo-classical realist analysis of shifting international and domestic imperatives.

In the book's second section, we consider the role of ideas and identity as a structural limit to change. In Chapter 4, Richard Jackson analyses the culturally embedded discourses of the War on Terror, emphasizing the institutionalised nature of the conflict. Building on this, in Chapter 5, Michelle Bentley argues that rhetorical coercion continues to act as a cultural constraint on change, as understandings of terrorism in the media, popular culture and everyday life continue to encourage continuity. In Chapter 6, Ty Solomon takes this argument further still in arguing that the emotional and affective investment of Americans in the war effort actively works against the possibility of greater change in US foreign policy.

In the books third section, substantive policy areas are assessed, which represent three of the most significant issues the Obama Administration has faced in attempting to negotiate George Bush's foreign policy legacy. In Chapter 7, Mike Aaronson delivers a broad assessment of Obama's approach to war, intervention and the use of force. In Chapter 8, Wali Aslam analyses Obama's notorious use of drones, within America's overarching Pakistan policy. In Chapter 9, Andrew Futter considers Obama's nuclear policy. Finally, in the book's fourth section and Chapter 10, Lee Jarvis reflects on the nature of appeals to 'time' in Obama's foreign policy and its study. This theme is also picked up in the Conclusion, which explores how we might conceptualise change

and continuity in US foreign policy, as well as revisiting the related roles of volition and structural constraint.

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