

GLOBAL TEN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PRESIDENT IN 2013

The World in 2013

Jessica T. Mathews

Three major forces will be looming behind the headlines, driving events in 2013: the crisis of the Western democratic model, rising sectarian strife in the Middle East, and worries about American withdrawal from the world. The Obama administration must realize that no “foreign policy” issue will matter as much to global economic, political, and ultimately security conditions in the coming year as whether the United States can demonstrate that it is able to deal with its economic crisis.

Challenges

Beyond the Fiscal Cliff: Savings, Healthcare, and Inequality | Dadush, Naim

Political bickering has blinded American leadership to the deeply rooted problems with the U.S. economy. America’s fundamentals remain strong—from its capacity to innovate to its high productivity. But the United States will only make the most of its potential if President Obama takes decisive action and with the support of Congress manages to increase savings, reform a healthcare system that is draining resources, and combat high levels of inequality.

Avoiding Catastrophic Failure in Afghanistan | Chayes, Grare

The U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan seems to be driving the country toward disintegration. Without substantive changes in the U.S. approach, Afghan government institutions are unlikely to survive the withdrawal of international forces. Preventing an implosion and attendant regional chaos requires expanding stalled reconciliation talks to include a broader range of stakeholders, helping the Pakistani leadership espouse formal channels for addressing its regional interests rather than violent proxies, and cooperating with Central Asian actors.

The Iranian Nuclear Threat | Sadjadpour, Perkovich

The challenges of diplomacy with Tehran are undeniable. But the potential ramifications of a military attack on Iran are so dire that President Obama must give engagement another chance. With Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei still a formidable obstacle to any binding nuclear deal, the realistic aim of diplomacy should not be forging a comprehensive, long-term agreement. The administration should instead focus on motivating Iran to cap its nuclear development.

A New Great-Power Relationship With Beijing | Paal, Haenle

The United States and China must find ways to cooperate if the rebalance of American policy toward Asia is to succeed. New leaders in Washington and Beijing should put aside their mutual mistrust, learn to avoid unhealthy competition, and find ways to cooperate. Only then can the Obama administration address troubling territorial disputes and regional tensions, forge a new approach to North Korea, and enact an ambitious economic agenda.

Awakening to a New Arab World | Muasher, Wilkens

The United States must further the cause of democracy in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Doing so requires realistic, pragmatic U.S. leadership to encourage reform and promote the development of civil society in the region. The Obama administration should focus on institutions and engage with all nonviolent groups, including Islamists. Effective U.S. engagement will be crucial to resolving crises from Syria and Iran to Israel and Palestine.

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Opportunities

Managing the Unconventional Oil and Gas Bonanza | Burwell, Gordon

The United States is awash with new energy. But previously untapped sources of oil and gas can have long-term impacts on climate if their development is not properly managed. Strong and effective presidential leadership is necessary if the United States is to make the most of its new resources. President Obama must work with private, public, and nongovernmental organization leaders to develop a transparent carbon-pricing structure that advances national energy, economic, and climate security.

The Game Changer: Cooperative Missile Defense | Trenin, Collins

The Obama administration has a unique opportunity to redefine the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship by cooperating with Moscow on missile defense. A missile defense system that does not jeopardize the current strategic balance will help erase lingering Cold War animosity and promote stability in the broader Euro-Atlantic region. And progress on missile defense technology sharing, data exchanges, and joint staff exercises could pave the way for negotiations on long-stalled issues like nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

A New Friendship: U.S.-India Relations | Tellis

The U.S.-Indian relationship is vital to maintaining a balance of power in Asia that is favorable to the United States. The two states have already overcome the most difficult challenge—integrating India into the global nonproliferation regime. But deepening the partnership requires President Obama to address institutional deficiencies in Washington, cooperate with New Delhi on Afghanistan and Iran, build up India's defense capabilities, and encourage Indian economic reform.

Reenergizing Democracy Promotion | Carothers

Democracy promotion is central to U.S. foreign policy, but the loss of global democratic momentum, problems of Western political credibility, and the rise of alternative political models are making it a more challenging task than ever. The Obama administration must not back away. It should not hesitate to push governments—even friendly ones—on democratic missteps and engage non-Western democratic powers as new partners in the endeavor.

The Dragon Dance: U.S.-China Security Cooperation | Acton

China's nuclear modernization concerns the United States and its Asian allies, but Washington has largely failed to engage Beijing effectively on nuclear strategy. The failure stems at least in part from China's view that engagement narrowly focused on nuclear issues is a losing proposition. To make progress in his second term, President Obama should offer a broader vision for strategic cooperation that includes reducing nuclear risks by restraining competition in the conventional realm.

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