

**Will Either American Presidential Candidate
Change U.S. Foreign Policy Toward East Asia?**

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The new President of the United States is not likely to make any fundamental changes to the priorities and goals of U.S. foreign policy. Senators McCain and Obama can be expected to employ different methods to achieve similar foreign policy goals. Some bilateral irritations will persist, but prospects appear bright for continuing improvement of bilateral relations regardless of who is the next U.S. president..

Both men are internationalists and deem it imperative that the United States be a leader in world affairs. Both oppose isolationism, the retreat of U.S. military and economic power back to its pre-World War II posture. They differ, however, over how to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals. McCain prefers reliance on unilateral action or unilateralism. This suggests a greater willingness to use unilateral coercive tactics such as economic and military pressure to advance U.S. interests. Obama prefers multilateral diplomacy first with reliance on coercive tactics as a last resort. He emphasizes first forging a coalition of allies and friends based on shared goals and common action designed to achieve success in negotiations with one's adversaries. Only if this fails would he turn to economic and military pressure.

McCain or Obama share the same national priorities for the United States. Defense of the American people comes first and international terrorism is seen as the primary threat to the American people and to world peace. Both emphasize the need to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and related technology. Maintaining a strong defense, both assert, requires a prosperous economy. Consequently restoring America's economic vitality is their foremost domestic priority.

McCain and Obama also agree on the strategic priorities of U.S. foreign policy. The Middle East, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, comes first followed by halting nuclear proliferation, particularly regarding Iran and North Korea. On the Middle East they differ. Obama wishes to reduce US military forces in Iraq so that they can be transferred to Afghanistan. He would also enlarge the US ground forces so that they can be better prepared to deal with potential threats in other parts of the world. McCain wishes to maintain the US military presence in Iraq at its current level and far into the future. At the same time he supports increasing the size of the US military around the world, including in Afghanistan.

Both men wish to see the United States continue its current policies toward China. They champion a "one China" policy but also advocate the continuation of arms sales to Taiwan. McCain seems more concerned than Obama about China's perceived military modernization, but neither man deems China a potential enemy. On the contrary they view China as a potential friend and a valuable trading partner. They see U.S. involvement in the Six Party Talks as the best way to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program, but criticize the Bush Administration's failure thus far to win North Korea commitment to a vigorous verification protocol. On the negative side, they urge China to demonstrate greater restraint regarding environmental pollution and greater respect for international trade laws, labor standards and human rights.

Obviously their major differences involve domestic and not foreign policy. This will ensure continuity of generally harmonious US-China relationship.