



The Foreign Policy Superbowl

50 questions for Obama and Romney: No guys, you can't punt.

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Yes, the topics for Monday night's presidential debate on foreign policy have **already been announced**. And sure, moderator Bob Schieffer only has 90 minutes. But an hour and a half of international affairs during an election dominated by economic issues is an exciting prospect for us at **Foreign Policy**.

We've reached out to our readers, our contributors, and outside experts ranging from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich to Pimco CEO Mohamed El-Erian with a simple prompt: What would you ask the candidates? Here's what they said (for more great questions, check out **Shadow Government's list**):

Newt Gingrich -- former House speaker and Republican presidential candidate

1. How big a threat is Syrian chemical weapons falling into the wrong hands, and what would you do about it?
2. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is warning about Iran crossing a red line. If Israel preemptively attacks Iran, what would your administration do?
3. The Chinese are crowding Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam with territorial demands. How would you respond?
4. There is a real possibility that Greece will collapse and then drag Spain and other countries into default. The impact on European banks could be bigger than in 2008. No one knows what the effect on American banks would be. What would your administration do?

Joseph Nye -- Harvard University

5. Governor Romney, in your book *No Apology* you extol the importance of American soft power. So far, so good. But then you attack Big Bird, an exemplar of American soft power. Why? Did you forget?

Joseph Cirincione -- Ploughshares Fund

6. The previous administration launched two wars that were far more costly, killed far more people, and lasted far longer than officials had predicted. If you launch military strikes against Iran, can you tell us how this will end?

Elisa Massimino -- Human Rights First

7. Governor Romney, would you revoke the executive order banning torture?

8. President Obama, do you still intend to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay? If so, how?

9. Governor Romney, would you try terrorism suspects in federal courts?

10. President Obama, why shouldn't Americans know the criteria you use to decide that the U.S. government may kill terrorist suspects?

Ian Bremmer -- Eurasia Group

11. President Obama, given how much money the United States borrows from China each day, how can your administration expect to persuade the Chinese government to do anything it wouldn't otherwise do?

12. Governor Romney, if we were to see large scale pro-democracy demonstrations in Saudi Arabia, similar to those we saw last year in Cairo, would your administration side with the Saudi citizens demanding democracy or with their government?

Karl Eikenberry -- former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

13. How will America's recent experiences in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan inform your foreign policy?

14. What do you consider the most severe threat facing the United States in the next 10 to 15 years and how do you intend to address it?

C. Christine Fair -- Georgetown University

15. How will your administration assess the Pakistani threat after 2014 and how will you manage it?

Mohamed El-Erian -- Pimco

16. Is America's exercise of soft power linked to its economic wellbeing at home?

Daniel Drezner -- Tufts University

17. There's been a lot of talk about who our greatest geopolitical foe is in the world. Which country do you think is our greatest ally, and why?

18. Governor Romney, you've argued repeatedly that China has manipulated its currency to obtain an unfair trade advantage. While that might have been true in the past, **the latest data** suggest that China halted this activity in 2012. Do you still plan to label China a currency manipulator on day one?

19. President Obama, your administration's numerous and shifting statements on the Benghazi attack suggest a lack of coordination between the intelligence community, the State Department, and the White House on a vital matter of national security. How did this happen? If reelected, how will you improve policy coordination in your second term?

20. The United States can best advance its interests in the world with a strong Europe. As president, what will you do to help our European allies resolve the eurozone crisis?

21. The Sino-American relationship is perhaps the most important strategic interaction in the world over the next decade. How important should human rights be in that relationship?

Kenneth Roth -- Human Rights Watch

22. President Obama, you have dramatically increased the targeted killing of suspected terrorists with unmanned drones, including in countries like Yemen and Somalia that are far away from any traditional battlefield. You make the final decision about who is to be killed, with no independent review by any court. Are you comfortable bequeathing that power to your successors as president -- would you trust a President Romney, for example, to decide on his own whether an American citizen could be placed on the kill list? What if other countries, say China or Russia, asserted the same power to kill their enemies across the world?

23. Governor Romney, you've said that people fighting for freedom and dignity in the Middle East feel that president Obama is "indifferent to their quest." Can you say what you would do differently from the Obama administration to support human rights in any specific country, especially U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain?

24. George W. Bush famously looked into Russian President Vladimir Putin's soul and found a man he could work with. But Putin today is turning back the clock in Russia, imposing increasingly severe restrictions on protesters who seek a more accountable government. What would you do to press Putin to end this crackdown, given that you also need Russia's cooperation in places like Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria?

25. The world over, the Internet has been a vehicle for freedom, enabling people to mobilize and press their government for democratic change. Yet in China, the government is insisting that American Internet companies help it censor the Internet as a condition of doing business there. Today, these companies are alone in standing up to Beijing. What will you do to help them? Would you endorse a law prohibiting American Internet companies from participating in any Chinese censorship efforts?

Jamie Fly -- Foreign Policy Initiative

26. What are our long-term interests in Afghanistan? Are they purely strategic or do we also have a moral interest in what type of Afghan society we leave behind as we transition our role in that country?

27. What are the circumstances under which you as president would be willing to intervene militarily in a country or conflict without the approval of the United Nations Security Council?

Karim Sadjadpour -- Carnegie Endowment

28. President Obama, you've been criticized by Governor Romney for neglecting to support Iran's opposition Green Movement in the summer of 2009. If you had to rewind to that summer, what would you do differently, if anything? Governor Romney, what would you do, specifically, to support democratic change in Iran?

Justin Logan -- Cato Institute

29. Regardless of whether it was good strategy, **was the war in Libya constitutional?**

30. President Obama, in 2007 you **wrote** that "changing the dynamic in Iraq will allow us to focus our attention and influence on resolving the festering conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians -- a task that the Bush administration

neglected for years." The dynamic in Iraq has changed, but our attention and influence seem to have done nothing on Israel/Palestine. What went wrong?

31. Governor Romney, **almost all of your advisors** are hawkish neoconservatives, many of whom served in the Bush administration and all of whom supported George W. Bush's foreign policy. The American people regret the direction of U.S. foreign policy under Bush. Why should they believe that your foreign policy would be any different than Bush's?

32. Governor Romney, one of your leading foreign policy advisors **suggested** that if you had been president and shown leadership, Ambassador Chris Stevens would never have been murdered in Libya. Do you agree with him? What would your leadership have done to preclude the attack?

33. Governor Romney, in 2007 you **wrote** that "radical Islam has one goal: to replace all modern Islamic states with a worldwide caliphate while destroying the United States and converting all nonbelievers, forcibly if necessary, to Islam." You then argued that this threat is "just as real" as those posed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. But you can't really believe that the radical Islamists have as good a shot at destroying the United States and establishing a global caliphate as Hitler did of dominating all of Europe, can you?

Clyde Prestowitz -- Economic Strategy Institute

34. The pivot to Asia has emphasized U.S. military and geopolitical commitments and deployments. But aren't we losing influence in Asia not because of lack of military strength but because of our declining ability to compete economically with the 'Asian Miracle' economies?

35. Both of you have emphasized that you will create jobs by negotiating more free trade agreements. But the offshoring of U.S. jobs has accelerated in the wake of the free trade deals (NAFTA, the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, China's admission to the World Trade Organization) we've already done. Why do you think more free trade deals would create net new jobs instead of simply increasing the offshoring of jobs?

36. You both say that American workers will always win on a level playing field, but is that true? Isn't it the case that we no longer know how to make things like flat-panel electronic displays, televisions, and advanced materials, and that we have a huge trade deficit in the high-technology products that we are supposed to be so good at producing?

37. Globalization has divided the world between those countries like China, Germany, Singapore, and South Korea that have full-blown industrial policies and geoeconomic strategies, and those countries like Britain and the United States that take a completely free trade approach. The strategic trades seem to be doing better. Should America begin to act more like China and Germany and less like Britain when it comes to its international economic policies?

James Traub -- Center on International Cooperation

38. Governor Romney, you and your running mate, Paul Ryan, have compared today's Egypt and its Islamist president, Mohamed Morsy, to the Iran of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Presumably that means that you regard Morsy's election as bad for Egypt and bad for the United States. Is that the case? Do you think that democracy, on balance, has brought more harm than good to the Arab world?

39. President Obama, your national security strategy describes global climate change as a "severe" national-security threat. If climate change really does pose such a danger, why has your administration spent so little time or political capital on it?

40. Governor Romney, the 2008 GOP platform called for taking "measured and reasonable steps" to curb global warming, while this year's platform opposes all such steps. Do you believe that human activity is causing the climate to change? If it is, what should the government be doing about it?

41. President Obama, after months of deliberation in 2009, you decided to adopt a "counterinsurgency" strategy in Afghanistan. Three years later, with American

troops beginning to withdraw, the Taliban are far from defeated and many observers say that Afghanistan's national and local government is in a shambles. What gives you confidence that whatever gains the United States has made will survive American withdrawal?

42. Governor Romney, you didn't think the war in Afghanistan was important enough to include in your convention speech. And yet, like the president, you want American troops to remain there until the end of 2014. What goals are so important that American men and women should continue fighting and dying there?

Michael Shifter -- Inter-American Dialogue

43. A number of Latin American presidents and former presidents, including some of America's closest allies in the region, have said that the U.S. anti-drug policy has largely failed. Indeed, some of the presidents are suggesting that decriminalizing the use of marijuana and perhaps other illicit drugs may be one way to stem the crime wave in some countries. Why shouldn't the United States seriously explore new approaches rather than continue current policies that, according to most experts, have yielded disappointing results?

44. Every country in this hemisphere has urged the United States to drop its embargo on Cuba. And so has every country in Europe. Why do you think the United States is so isolated on this issue? Why does every other democratic country in the world (aside from Israel) believe normal diplomatic relations would be more effective in bringing democracy to Cuba than current U.S. policy?

45. Both Democrats and Republicans recognize the growing importance and influence of Latinos in the United States. Beyond demographics, Latin America is also crucial for U.S. trade (we export twice as much to Mexico as to China) and for our supply of oil and minerals. Within a decade, Brazil and Mexico may be two of the three largest oil suppliers to the United States. What steps will you

take to make sure that this hemisphere occupies a higher place on the foreign policy agenda and is treated in a more strategic way?

From Twitter

46. Which is better for US: economically strong, authoritarian PRC or economically struggling, democratic PRC? -- [@OBrienRobertd](#)

47. How can the US government best support better conditions for women around the world? -- [@WomenThrive](#)

48. [The] US Constitution vests authority to declare war with Congress. Is this provision now obsolete? -- [@CatoFP](#)

49. How does a fmr law prof feel about killing US citizens w/o trials in countries w/ which we're not at war? -- [@LT_VT](#)

50. Ask about US role in ending govt-led atrocities in #Sudan. -- [@SherriWhit](#)