
America and the World in the Age of Obama

Columns and articles by Ambassador Derek Shearer



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Preface

In 2007, at the invitation of my friend Arianna Huffington I began writing occasional political and economic commentary for her website, The Huffington Post. Most of these pieces deal with the presidency of Occidental College alumnus Barack Obama. Many describe course projects which my Oxy students undertook to analyze the policies of the Obama administration. Each December, I would reflect on the year's events, and also highlight my favorite books and films.

I was a friendly critic of the President and his administration. I tried to suggest constructive policies to further progressive goals, especially in the realm of the economy and US foreign policy. Rereading the pieces (which I have left as written at the time), I feel confident that my judgement on most matters has been confirmed by events. I like to think, as most commentators or former officials do, that had my advice been followed, the outcome of public affairs might have been different. However, unlike golf or some actors' careers, there are few makeovers in history. Counter factuials might make for good science fiction or interesting parlor discussion, but usually it can sound like sour grapes. That's not my intention in having these columns reproduced. I simply trust that there might be a few lessons for next the time a progressive government comes to power.

In addition to my Huffington Post columns, this collection includes two articles that I wrote on sports, diplomacy and globalization. Since returning to Occidental from the Clinton administration in 2000, I indulged a lifelong passion for sports by occasionally teaching a course on sports and diplomacy. It was a break from bleaker issues such as the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria or our fraught relationships with Russia and China. The article from the Harvard International Review is a summary of my research that I've given as an illustrated lecture to university audiences, including at the Kennedy School of Government.

My wife Sue Toigo, Oxy '69, kindly read and corrected my Huffington Post columns before I posted them. Occidental diplomacy major William Butenschoen provided invaluable assistance assembling this collection and preparing it for print publication. He has also been an outstanding research assistant in preparing talks on the 2016 Presidential election that I delivered in Oxford, Berlin, Amsterdam, and at universities in New Zealand, China, and Canada during the campaign year. My thanks also goes to Adriana Lim, Marisa MacAskill, and Chamnan Lim, administrators at the McKinnon Center for Global Affairs during the past decade, who have been wonderful collaborators in all of my work at Occidental.

This book is dedicated to my grandchildren Viggo and Jasmine in hopes that they might have an interest some day in reading what their grandfather had to say about the age of Obama.

— *Derek Shearer*

Occidental College, March 2017

Hillary As An Agent of Change

December 10, 2007—Huffington Post

Is Senator Hillary Clinton ready to serve as president? And, if elected would she be an agent of change or a protector of the status quo?

I have known Hillary Clinton since she first met my friend Bill Clinton at Yale Law School and he fell head over heels in love with her. I had met Bill at Oxford when he was rooming as a Rhodes Scholar with my brother-in-law. Bill brought Hillary to my family home in Los Angeles, where we spent many hours talking about the changes taking place in the US in the 1960s and prospects for progressive reform. Polls show that by virtue of her political experience and her recognized talents, people recognize that Hillary is almost uniquely ready to serve as president and as commander-in-chief, even among those who politically oppose her. But I also have good reasons for believing that were she to be elected, she would be an even more effective and accomplished president than her husband. Because of her abilities and sensibilities, and the likely circumstances of her winning, Hillary would be a strong leader who manages change in the public interest—at home and abroad—in the manner of FDR or Harry Truman. She is, in fact, the true heir to the New Deal tradition of the Democratic Party, but for a new era.

This opinion, I believe, is reality-based, not simply the wishful thinking of an old friend. I have had the opportunity to see her up close as a political actor on the world and national stage and to observe her evolution over decades.

While serving as US Ambassador to Finland in the 1990s, I hosted Hillary for a two-day visit

to Helsinki. I organized a meeting of what the Finnish press called “the most powerful women in the country” to talk with her at my official residence. In Finland at the time, the Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, Speaker of the Parliament and head of the National Bank were all women. They came to meet the First Lady along with a few leading women entrepreneurs and business executives, and top editors and authors. For more than two hours, they discussed public policy and politics. The lively discussion ranged from the details of Finnish health policy to the difficulties that women face in the political arena. These women viewed Hillary as an important political figure in her own right. She had no aides to prompt her or hand her cue cards. Afterwards, many of the women told me how impressed they were with her, and that they hoped that one day she would run for president.

On that visit, I also accompanied Hillary to a one-on-one meeting with Martti Ahtisaari, the President of Finland, and an accomplished UN diplomat. The conversation with the president went on for two hours and ranged over complex issues of European security and US foreign policy. It was very much a discussion of equals in intelligence.

Hillary also won over my skeptical staff at the US embassy, many of whom had read the negative US press about her and expected that she would be a kind of shrewish Dragon Lady. In fact, she charmed everyone at the embassy with her openness, her sense of humor, and her natural kindness. She took the time to ask personal questions of my staff, and to thank them for their service—from the

political officers and military attaches to my cook and driver.

“She was not what I had expected,” one of my intelligence officers remarked. “She is terrific and incredibly smart.” That speaker was a lifelong Republican.

As First Lady, Hillary made visits to other embassies across the globe, and I heard reports from colleagues at posts in Asia and Africa and Europe that mirrored my own observations of her in Finland. She impressed international leaders with her knowledge, ability, and charm, and she learned from these experiences. On her final night in Finland, we took a walk without security along the rocky coast to a café overlooking the harbor. My cell phone rang, and it was President Clinton, checking in with his wife, asking her for advice on a political matter in Washington. I heard her recount to him how much she enjoyed visiting Finland—a country that combines a dynamic market economy with a societal commitment to equality and community—and how it seemed to be the kind of decent society that we should strive for back home.

During the 1992 campaign, I had observed first-hand Hillary respond calmly and coolly to challenging and embarrassing political crises, and even to her own political gaffes. After her unfortunate comment about not wanting to be the little woman who stayed at home and baked, my sister who traveled with her at the time gave her our family chocolate chip recipe. She got the message, and had cookies baked and served them to the press corps. Not only does Hillary have an ability to laugh at herself, but she quickly learns from her mistakes. She has a first class temperament—a hallmark of many great political leaders.

Many political pundits said that she would fall on her face when she ran for the Senate in New York, but she proved them wrong. As a senator, she assembled one of the most talented, effective staffs in the Congress, and she displayed tact and deftness in working with other senators, even across the aisle with Republicans like John McCain and Lindsey Graham. As president, she will be ready on day one to work closely with Congressional leaders to move a progressive agenda forward. Her colleagues know her and respect her—and if she had not chosen to run for President, I am certain that she would have been the next Majority Leader.

She chose to serve on the Senate military committee. One four star officer with whom I worked on NATO peacekeeping had to testify before the committee and also meet privately with her. He told me afterwards that she was direct, had a mastery of complex issues, and was the opposite of patronizing or defensive about military issues. Her views on defense and foreign policy are progressive as well as nuanced and thoughtful. She does not play to the crowd with cheap rhetoric. She has promised to bring US troops out of Iraq, but having a grasp of the challenges involved she will do it in a way that does not make a bad situation worse. And she will do it with the close consultation and cooperation of the military. She understands the importance of American moral leadership, and how much “Brand America” has been tarnished by the rash and radical policies of the Bush administration. She knows first hand how the administration has ignored the counsel of professionals in the Pentagon, State Department and CIA. She would restore competence to the US government, and begin to repair our damaged standing in the world. She understands, as President Bush does not, that the leader of the US is also a kind of president of the world, and has responsibility to lead but not to try to

dominate. She does not need a Henry Kissinger or other eminence grises to tell her what to think about the world. She has a depth of experience and a detailed understanding of international affairs. She will assemble a talented and progressive team to manage US national security and work with other nations to construct a new New Deal for the age of globalization. That is her vision.

As for change at home, her commitment to progressive values should never be held in doubt. Since she was a student at Wellesley protesting the Vietnam War and then as an activist law student at Yale when I first met her, she has been a progressive. In New Haven, she worked at Yale medical school on issues of early childhood education and health care, and she is committed to bringing universal health care to the US. She is not an ideologue about the means, but she is unswerving about the goal, and she knows that other countries have found various ways to achieve this end and that we can too. Her interest and commitment to children and their welfare is signified by her lifelong support for her friend Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, and for the issues that Edelman has championed.

All of her adult life she has displayed a passionate regard for how government can expand opportunity for all of our citizens by leveling the playing field for those not blessed with wealthy parents. As First Lady in Arkansas, she made educational reform her priority. President Carter appointed her to the board of the Legal Services Corporation, and she fought to expand its provision of legal services for poor Americans. She has fought for her beliefs, and when she has lost she has gotten back up and continued the struggle, altering tactics if necessary to achieve practical results. Hillary is a hard-headed, reality-based, practical progressive—and it is no accident that the Radical Right opposes

her and has tried to bring her down. They know that she will not fold under pressure of attack, and that she cannot be bought off by special interests.

Unlike her husband—the most gifted natural politician of my generation—Hillary has not always wanted to be President or even Senator. In fact, it was Congressman Charlie Rangel of New York who suggested that she run for the Senate, not her husband or some political advisor. She has grown in to her political persona. Hillary wants to be President for the change that she can bring in the lives of our citizens and in the actions of our country—for the opportunity to make a better, fairer and more decent American society and global community—not just for the position and power that the job brings. Of this, I am dead certain.

And she knows from her years alongside her husband that as President she cannot be a leader of change by herself. It is myth and misunderstanding that a president alone can change a nation for the better (although, as we have learned, a bad president can do great damage). Hillary understands that only with allies in Congress and in statehouses and city halls across the nation can she drive forward a progressive agenda. And she understands that she will need to inspire and empower citizen groups to push for reform. FDR did not make the New Deal by himself. He led a national government that responded with passion and strength to workers and citizens who raised their voices for progressive change. If Hillary is elected President, and if as is likely a solidly Democratic Congress is elected, she will have helped to change the political atmosphere of the country, to create hope for the possibility of progressive change—and she will be in a position to lead that change. It will be an historic moment of great consequence to the nation, and I have no doubt that she will be

equal to the task. I cannot think of another American politician who would be better prepared. Strengthened by her bond with the Americans who elect her, Hillary would also reach out to the reasonable Republicans within the Congress who can be partners—precisely in order to enact a reform agenda.

History sometimes provides opportunities for nations and for leaders—but the outcome is not predetermined. I have spent forty years in progressive movements and democratic governments, first as a student activist then as an official in state and local government, and later as a federal official and US diplomat. I would not stake my reputation on supporting just another politician. I know Hillary, I trust her and I am certain that she is one person who will be the leader that our time demands.

Change That Really Matters

January 9, 2008—*Huffington Post*

On election night in New Hampshire, loud cheers of “Change, Change, Change,” greeted Senator Obama as he addressed his supporters. A sea of signs emblazoned with the word “Change” faced the cameras. At Governor Romney’s event, he similarly talked about amorphous Change.

It is election time and Americans are being deluged with campaign platitudes—calls to greatness, and above all, promises by candidates to be agents of change. Unfortunately, most of this, whether heartfelt or not, is just rhetoric. Real change requires alterations in political power. I have already argued on this site why I believe Senator Clinton is the candidate most likely to bring real change—and it is heartening that the voters in New Hampshire have ratified that judgment.

If elected in November, Senator Clinton will first have to spend time and energy repairing the damage that George Bush has done to the country—but it will be important for her supporters, and for the country not to forget the larger possibilities of change. Democrats will most likely ring up big majorities in the House and Senate, and a Democratic president will be able to work with a progressive Congress for an agenda of change, not simply reconstruction.

There are political reforms that deeply matter—that will create genuine change to build a more decent American society. Our society could offer greater equality of opportunity—a playing field that is more level—with less extreme gaps in living standards between high and low. It could be an America of greater civic participation and greater sense of community—a country that cherished,

protected and nurtured its human and natural resources. This 21st Century America would still have a dynamic market economy open to the world—but it would be a more democratic capitalism and a more patriotic country.

Is this Utopia? I don’t think so. I have lived in such a decent society when I served as US Ambassador to Finland in the 1990s.

As Finns readily admit, their country is not heaven on earth—but it is an example of a democratic society and a market economy with the lowest rate of inequality in the world. It is a society that efficiently provides world class health care to all its citizens. It is a country that ranks near the top in the world in education and in economic competitiveness. It is a society that protects the natural environment and promotes strong civic and cultural values—and produces world class musicians, ice hockey players and global companies such as Nokia.

Finland is not singular. Other Nordic countries—Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—share similar characteristics, as do such countries as New Zealand, Australia, Austria and the Netherlands. Nearer to home, Canada is another model of a decent society.

Of course, The United States is not a small country with a relatively homogeneous population, as are most of the more egalitarian countries. I am not arguing that the US could or should adopt the Finnish model or the New Zealand model of more democratic capitalism. That’s unrealistic—but there are lessons we can learn.

All of these countries share certain social factors. They have high rates of voter turnout, high rates of union membership, and strong civic cultures. Social scientists have found strong positive correlations between equality and both voter participation and union membership. As a rule, countries where the overwhelming majority of citizens vote and where a significant portion of the work force belong to unions do a better job of providing equal opportunity and more equal outcomes, as well as providing services such as universal health care. This should not surprise. Such societies have the countervailing power that economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued was needed but lacking in the US. When the less well off have greater political voice, their interests are better taken into account by the political system and the society. When citizens share more equitably in the benefits of economic growth, there is a greater sense of community.

In the US, the low rate of voter participation is a national disgrace. In international surveys of voter turnout, the US ranks anywhere from 35th to 100th, depending on the elections measured. Voting in the US is directly related to income and education. The current electoral system discourages voting by the bottom half of the socio-economic populace, and in some states actively disenfranchises potential voters. Only slightly more than half of eligible Americans will vote in the presidential election in November. This in a country where President Bush wants to spread democracy worldwide.

Union membership in the US is at a post WWII low, with only 12% of workers belonging to a union—the lowest level of any industrial nation. In Canada, the rate is close to 30%, and in Sweden it is 80%. During the Reagan-Bush years, a concerted effort has been made by corporations to fight unions. Globalization and job shifts abroad have also

depleted existing unionized industries. The weakened power of unions is a key factor in growing American inequality, the failure to achieve universal health care, and the decline in regulation of business.

America also is suffering a crisis of community. Experts have studied the decline in civic participation in the US. The rise of television, the growth of suburbs, and other cultural developments have all had effect. So has the cynicism that is bred when only working class Americans have to fight and die in foreign wars. Numerous studies show a hunger for community, for a patriotic sense of belonging to American society that is currently not met. Over 70% in polls support the notion of national service—and as even Senator John McCain has said, “National service is a crucial means of making our patriotism real, to the benefit of both ourselves and our country.”

There are three “non reformist” reforms—measures that change political power relationships and could lead to a better American society—that should be front and center on the progressive agenda:

1. Promote Greater Voter Turnout

The quickest and easiest way is to make Election Day a national holiday as recommended by the National Commission on Federal Electoral Reform—and to allow citizens to register on Election Day. In 2004, voter turnout was almost 15% higher in the six states that allow last minute registration. These simple reforms would greatly assist working and lower class Americans to participate in elections. Congress should also require that social service agencies and state departments of motor vehicles comply with the National Voter Registration Act (passed in 1993 but not enforced by the Bush Justice Department) to promote voter registration. In

Australia, where voter turnout is 95%, voting is actually mandatory. If we can require citizens to serve on juries, why can't we require voting as a condition of citizenship? This might be a more difficult reform to achieve, but it is worth debating.

2. Promote Union Membership

During the New Deal, union organizers would tell workers, "FDR wants you to join a union" and they were not far wrong. The next Congress should pass the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 800, S.1041) that will mandate a system of union representation and collective bargaining closer to the Canadian model. The next President could also appoint a pro-union Secretary of Labor, and fair minded experts to the National Labor Relations Board to create a more level playing field in collective bargaining.

3. Promote Community and National Service

Every high school and college should require community service for graduation—all of my children went to a secondary school in California that pioneered the concept. I doubt that any President could pass mandatory community service—but the next President and Congress could do a lot to encourage both community and national service. The Corporation for National and Community Service—created in 1993 to run AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Serve America—should be raised to a cabinet level position and a high profile leader, non partisan figure like Colin Powell appointed to lead it. Congress could create a National Service Bond for all babies to be used for education between ages 18 and 25 provided that the individual commits to two years of national or military service. New national service organizations could be created such as a Health Corps and an Environmental Corps (an update of FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps).

The Peace Corps could be expanded, and a new International Democracy Corps created to help weak countries build stronger democratic cultures. An International Entrepreneur Corps could promote market economics and community economic development.

Conservative forces will oppose all of these reforms—so it is vital for Senators and members of Congress to take ownership of them and become national advocates as Senator Wagner did for labor rights in the 1930s. Leadership roles are available for populist Senators such as Byron Dorgan and Kent Conrad, progressives such as Sherrod Brown and Bernie Sanders, and liberals such as Teddy Kennedy, Carl Levin, Barbara Mikulski, Barney Frank and others. Even independents like New York Mayor Bloomberg and retiring moderate Republicans like Chuck Hagel could play important roles if they chose. All of them could provide the leadership and political support that a change agent President must have to win against wealthy special interests, and against those who use cultural issues like gay marriage to divide Americans.

Polls show that most Americans want universal health insurance, tougher consumer and financial regulation, a more equitable tax system, better environmental protection, and a repairing of America's reputation abroad. The road to all of these requires a significant broadening of political power and democratic participation in American society. That's why so much is at stake in this Presidential election.

Sex, Race and Presidential Politics

February 3, 2008—Huffington Post

On the February 3 edition of Fox News Sunday, panelist and *New York Times* columnist Bill Kristol said the only people supporting Senator Hillary Clinton “are the Democratic establishment and white women.” Kristol asserted that, “it would be crazy for the Democratic Party to follow an establishment that’s led it to defeat year after year,” and added, “White women are a problem, that’s, you know—we all live with that.” His fellow panelists Juan Williams, NPR correspondent and an African American, and Fox TV correspondent Brit Hume erupted in laughter. Williams blurted out, “Not me!” and Hume added: “Bill, for the record, I like white women.”

Kristol’s concern for the Democratic Party is touching—and I suppose one would have to interview his wife to know what he really meant. Of course, it was just the boys having fun again at the expense of the first serious woman candidate for president.

A few weeks ago, I was doing work for the US military in Florida, and happened to visit an independent bookstore. By the cash register was a display of Hillary Clinton Nutcracker dolls for sale, and bags of walnuts. After purchasing one, a real man could sit at home cracking walnuts between an unflattering Hillary doll’s thighs, and have a few laughs with his pals. I asked one of the store managers if they would sell an Obama doll done up like a shuck n’jive minstrel or an Amos and Andy look alike. Of course not, I was told, that would be racist.

It has become increasingly clear in this presidential campaign that it is harder to run as a woman than as an African American male.

Senator Clinton made this point gently herself on the *Tavis Smiley Show* on Friday, February 1. Smiley asked what one thing bothered her most about what the press and people said about her. She told Tavis that she was amazed when after New Hampshire the press was shocked to discover that she had feelings, cared about the causes she espouses and that she showed emotion by tearing up. Clinton explained that of course she cares and feels deeply, but that it is difficult for a woman candidate to get the right balance between seriousness and emotion. A woman running for president has to be seen as tough enough to be commander-in-chief, and at the same time caring enough to understand the problems of the American people.

What’s more, Clinton told Smiley, women have to get the hair and dress thing right or else that too becomes a campaign issue. Clinton went on to tell Tavis about the meeting she had with me at the US embassy in Helsinki, when I as the ambassador invited leading Finnish women politicians, including the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and the president of the Bank of Finland to meet the First Lady. These highly accomplished Finnish women shared stories with Hillary about how the press commented on their dresses or their stockings, and how they were still often excluded from Finland’s male sauna culture.

The US press seems much more sensitive about so-called racial comments than about sexist ones. The overheated coverage of Senator Clinton’s historical reference to LBJ’s important role in passing civil rights legislation is but one example. Numerous liberal friends of mine have been quick to accuse the Clinton campaign of playing the

“race card.” I have heard few defenses by these same friends of the often sexist coverage of Hillary Clinton by the mainstream press.

It was also striking that in the Democratic debate at the Kodak Theater Senator Clinton was questioned forcefully about why she can't control her husband. Senator Obama was not asked about some of the controversial and racially charged remarks that his very bright and feisty wife Michelle has made in his support. The fact that Michelle made Barack quit smoking before she would let him declare for president, is never mentioned as a sign that he might be under her thumb or a weak man.

Of course, it is historic for the Democratic Party to be facing the choice of nominating either its first woman presidential candidate or its first African American. I asked my colleague at Occidental College, professor Caroline Heldman—editor of the study “Rethinking Madame President”—whether it is more of a risk for the Democrats to nominate a woman or a black candidate. Heldman believes that it is probably a wash. She estimates that polls will be off about 10% for either Hillary or Barack—that is to say, about 10% of likely voters will not tell the truth about their willingness to vote for a woman or a black. The drop-off between polls and actual voting for an African American was displayed in Harold Ford's race for Senate in Tennessee. This tendency has been labeled “the Bradley effect” after former LA Mayor Tom Bradley's losing race for Governor of California where polls failed to indicate accurately racial voting patterns.

Heldman believes that the presidency is still viewed as a masculine job, and there will be a similar “Bradley effect” for any woman running for the office. Senator Clinton might be able to make up the 10 percent gap by

increasing turnout among women, especially moderate Republican women. Since the African American community already votes Democratic, Obama would have to make up the short fall by winning more independent voters.

According to Heldman, the sex or race disadvantage for Clinton or Obama is similar. Both would have to overcome it with added turnout of women, independents or both.

For Democratic voters the choice comes down to one that actually transcends race and gender—who would make the best president. On the question of who might best win the election, both candidates share progressive values and similar programs, and both would be viciously attacked by Republicans as liberals, and for their respective gender or race. The argument that one or the other of them will attract more Republicans is not convincing. I doubt that many right wingers who “hate” Hillary, will embrace Barack.

Senator Clinton has been vetted by the media and attacked for over a decade by right wing opponents. It is fair to say that Senator Obama's career has not been given as thorough a going over. A leading TV correspondent recently said to me, “We really don't know too much about Obama except that he has an appealing life story and delivers great speeches.” The front page article in Sunday, February 3 *New York Times* on the compromises that Obama made in his nuclear bill and his relationship with power companies in Illinois is a useful start at a more careful examination of his political career. The last thing that the Democratic Party needs is to find out some unsettling or startling information about its nominee after the convention is over and the general election has begun.

Senator Clinton's history and her husband can be viewed in a variety of lights. Former President Clinton and his record seem to be viewed positively, at least with Democratic voters and some moderate Republicans—but his over-the-top behavior in South Carolina was troublesome. He tends to want to be the campaign manager, instead of a supportive spouse. In the general campaign, he would be a great asset especially in inner city and minority areas. She will have to continue to make clear that she is the candidate and will be in charge in the White House.

I have previously argued why I believe that Senator Clinton would make an even better president than her husband. I am less sure that this is the case with Senator Obama, and simply hoping it is true, is not enough for me. It is a good thing for Democrats that we have a competitive race—and it is vital that both candidates be subjected to in depth scrutiny. We want the strongest candidate in the field come the fall. Too much is at stake. Anyone who thinks that the Republicans will roll over and play nice slept through the last four campaigns.

Why Bipartisanship is a False Hope

February 7, 2008—Huffington Post

My friend Bruce Stokes, national economic correspondent for the *National Journal*, and co-author of *America Against The World* with pollster Andrew Kohut, has written an interesting and informative column in Thursday's *Congress Daily* titled, "The Myth of Bipartisanship." Stokes' analysis of data on the growing divide between Republicans and Democrats and even Republicans and Independents on major economic and political issues illustrates the importance of the Democratic candidate having a clear reform program—and the understanding that such a program will have to be advocated for and fought for politically in the country and in the next Congress.

There is similar polling data on foreign policy issues, with an even wider gap on such matters as the Iraq War and the conduct of the War on Terror. The Republican party has made it clear since Bill Clinton's election that they have no interest in a bipartisan foreign policy either. One might wish it otherwise, but this is the political terrain on which the national election will be fought in the fall.

I commend Bruce's article below to you, and to your friends who are mesmerized by talk of cross party unity from either McCain or Obama.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

An Illusory Ideal

As Americans, we, like many people, tell ourselves stories about who we are and what we believe. Too often these national myths are self-delusional.

A case in point is voters' avowed desire for bipartisanship in dealing with pressing

national problems, which has become a theme of the presidential campaign.

Americans tell pollsters and journalists that they are sick of the partisan divide in Washington and want a candidate who can reach across the aisle to get things done.

But recent polling on specific issues—jobs, health care and global warming—suggests that Americans can't even agree on what are the major challenges facing the nation, let alone what to do about them.

Voters seem to want compromise on their own terms: "I win; you lose."

Sens. Barack Obama, D-Ill., and John McCain, R-Ariz., tout their ability to tap into the electorate's hunger for bipartisanship. Each claims he can provide the inspiration and leadership needed to sooth partisan bickering. But surveys show such aspirations are likely to be frustrated by voters' stark differences over priorities. For, while the American public fancies itself bipartisan, it remains deeply partisan.

Bipartisanship has an iconic place in US history.

In his farewell address upon leaving the presidency, George Washington warned his fellow Americans against partisanship in domestic politics and called on them to serve the common good.

Today, many Americans apparently truly believe that bipartisan government would be the best government.

Just as the presidential campaign was getting under way last year, more than half of Democrats and more than three-quarters of independent voters said they wanted a candidate for president who could bridge partisan divides, according to a Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg national survey conducted June 7-10, among 1,183 adults. The survey had a 3-point error margin. This desire for a leader who can rise above the political fray is undoubtedly a reassuring self-image for Americans at a time of widespread public pessimism about the future, deep regrets about past political choices and the conduct of US foreign policy and a troubling realization of the profound anti-Americanism around the world.

And, in the face of a looming recession, both Democrats and Republicans do agree that efforts to strengthen the economy should be a priority, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey of 1,515 adults. The survey was conducted Jan. 9-13 and has a 3-point error margin.

Just a year ago there was a 12-point partisan divide on this issue. And, Americans have narrowed their differences—from a 19-point gap in 2007 to a 6-point gap—on the importance of dealing with energy problems.

But scratch a little deeper and voters are even more divided than ever about specific economic challenges.

Amid lagging job creation over the last few months, Democrats apparently feel the pain more than Republicans. Last year's 28-point-difference between Democrats and Republicans on the importance of improving the job situation has grown to 33 points, with Democrats showing more anxiety about unemployment.

Similarly, the 19-point partisan gap in dealing with problems of the poor and the needy has

grown to 27 points, with Democrats again more concerned than the GOP.

On other hot button issues there is similar disagreement. Democrats have long worried more than Republicans about providing health insurance for the uninsured. But that partisan difference is 38 points, up from 28 points in 2007.

The GOP has always accorded less importance to dealing with global warming. But now, despite all the recent evidence that the climate might be changing, partisan differences over whether this should be a national priority have grown from 25 points to 35 points.

Much of this deepening partisanship on specific issues must be laid at the doorstep of GOP voters, who not only have growing differences with Democrats, but also have parted ways with independents, according to the Pew data.

On giving priority to the problems of the poor, the gap between Democrats' attitudes and independents' views has shrunk from 21 points to 10 points in the last year.

Meanwhile, the difference between GOP sentiments and those of independents has actually grown from 2 points to 17 points. Similarly, on health care, the gap between views held by Democrats and independents has shrunk from 18 points in 2007 to 7 points today.

At the same time, the difference between attitudes of Republicans and independents has grown from 8 points to 31 points.

Finally, on giving priority to dealing with global warming, the differences between Democrats and independents remain largely unchanged since last year. But the gap

between Republicans and independents has grown from 17 points to 26 points.

The public's support for bipartisanship clearly exists in the abstract.

And, undoubtedly, this avowed willingness to put the good of the country before personal political concerns makes voters feel good about themselves. But that self-image is delusional. Americans remain sharply divided about the nation's major economic challenges, let alone what to do about them. They are bipartisan in theory, but partisan in practice.

—Bruce Stokes

Balance of Payments: Homeland Insecurity

February 28, 2008—Huffington Post

Americans are struggling against a rising tide of economic insecurity that engulfs them from all sides. To date, the debate in this year's presidential election has addressed this insecurity piecemeal, with proposals to expand healthcare coverage or improve retraining.

Republican and Democratic presidential candidates have failed to recognize that a patchwork of measures will not provide the comprehensive social safety net Americans need in a world of intensifying economic competition and rapid change in which individuals feel increasingly on their own.

With the nominees likely to be preoccupied with Iraq and recession fighting between now and the November election, it will be up to individual members of Congress to frame the public policy response to the economic stress their constituents face.

Congressional candidates must articulate a broad new social compact that creates for Americans a safe harbor in an increasingly turbulent world.

Such a vision is good psychology because it will reassure an increasingly insecure people that they are not alone.

It is good practically because it would strengthen the threadbare American social safety net. And it would be excellent politics.

The looming recession has brought the economic struggles Americans face into sharp focus. Over the last generation, 95 percent of wage earners have seen their wages decline, after adjustment for inflation, according to a

study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research last year.

Forty-seven million citizens already lack health insurance, nearly one in six Americans. And the fear of losing their healthcare coverage is the principal concern people express when they face unemployment. To add insult to injury, when people lose their jobs, they have only a one-in-three chance of qualifying for unemployment insurance.

Struggling to maintain their standard of living in the face of these challenges, Americans have borrowed more and more money. Living beyond their means has finally caught up with them.

The ratio of household debt to disposable income, which between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s was fairly stable at a little over 60 percent, has reached 130 percent.

Moreover, Americans' faith that however bad times are today, the future will be better for their children, now seems tragically misplaced.

A man in his 30s today has 12 percent less income, after adjusting for inflation, than a similarly aged American male did a generation ago, according to a study last year by Isabell Sawhill of the Brookings Institution and John Morton of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

The rags-to-riches Horatio Alger success story is little more than a myth. Only six percent of children born into the bottom fifth of the income distribution now make it to the top fifth. And a third of Americans are actually

downwardly mobile, making less than their parents.

Compounding people's sense of instability, a job in America is hardly a security blanket. In the early 1990s, it was thought that the average American held six or seven jobs in his or her lifetime.

An ongoing Labor Department study now suggests Americans hold between 15 and 18 jobs over their lives. That means coping with a new job, a new boss, a new work environment and a risk of making less income every three years, on average. Twentysomethings thrive on such change. Fortysomethings—with children and a mortgage—crave job stability and, absent that, need help weathering the constant flux in their work lives.

But the economic safety net America affords its citizens is weak and porous. The United States is the only major industrial country not to provide universal health care. Unemployment insurance replaces only about 30 percent of the lost income of low-wage jobless workers in the United States.

By comparison, the average low wage unemployed worker in other industrial countries gets benefits totaling 55 percent of their lost income. And Washington spends a fraction of what Germany or Great Britain spend on retraining.

All of these issues—especially health care—have been raised in the presidential campaign. But no candidate has attempted to allay voters' fears about the future by offering them a comprehensive vision of what can be done to help them deal with their economic insecurity.

Growing competition at home and abroad is a fact of modern life, generating great

economic benefits through added productivity and affording Americans a range of goods and services their parents never dreamed possible.

The economic cost of inhibiting that competition—through some “stop the world I want to get off” protectionist trade barriers or onerous regulation—would be doomed to fail. But government can help Americans endure inevitable ups and downs in their pay, help them mitigate the costs of ever more frequent shifts in their careers and help them weather the overwhelming costs of medical emergencies.

This requires a new, comprehensive, three-pronged social compact: universal health care, universal unemployment insurance and universal retraining.

A social safety net built on those three pillars will provide Americans with the reassurance they need to go forward in an increasingly uncertain world. And it could be a winning theme in the fall election.

Economics and Presidential Politics—“It’s Globalization, Stupid”

February 29, 2008—Huffington Post

Presidential campaigns are not well-suited for rational or sophisticated discussion of economics—and this year’s race is not any different.

Already we have seen candidates blaming trade with Mexico or exports from China for the nation’s economic woes, and for the decline of the middle class. In the Ohio primary, Senators Clinton and Obama have singled out NAFTA—the North American Free Trade Agreement—as the culprit in the state’s economic troubles. In turn, President Bush and the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* have attacked both Democrats as protectionist, acting like global bullies who demand to unilaterally rewrite trade agreements.

As David Leonhardt, the *New York Times* economics columnist, pointed out it is not trade with Mexico or Canada that has decimated Ohio’s manufacturing sector; rather, it is the rise of other international producers such as China, India and Russia. It is the competition from the post-Cold War global economy that has created both winners and losers in Ohio and elsewhere in the US.

In the past year, I have given lectures on globalization in a number of countries—and in each I have been asked by government officials and business leaders if the Democratic Party has become protectionist and if a Democratic president would abandon future trade agreements. I have explained to the Treasury in New Zealand, to the foreign ministry in Kazakhstan, and to the business leaders in Chile that it is not trade and the international economy that Americans fear, but the prospect of economic insecurity that

worries them. I pointed out that in the US, when workers lose their jobs they lose their health insurance. This makes a plant closing or office relocation a traumatic family happening.

Unemployment insurance is difficult to obtain, not generous, and not linked to retraining.

American workers like the low prices at Wal-Mart and other consumer benefits of the global economy, but they don’t want to sacrifice their family’s overall well being to the altar of free trade.

In 1992, James Carville, a Clinton campaign operative, famously taped the phrase, “It’s The Economy, Stupid” over his computer. His point was that the campaign should focus on voters’ worries over the state of the economy—and that his candidate Bill Clinton should make it clear every day that he felt their pain and shared their angst. Clinton was effective in displaying his concern, and incumbent President Bush was hapless. In one debate, a voter asked each to list the price of a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread, and a dozen eggs, and Clinton rattled them off while Bush floundered.

While the campaign made sure that Clinton maintained his message focus, policy advisors, myself included, tried to spell out exactly how a Clinton administration might address and ameliorate economic anxiety. Three friends from university days—Robert Reich, Ira Magaziner, and I drafted a campaign program that I titled “Putting People First.” We put forward an economic strategy that accepted the reality of the global economy, but proposed ways that the government would help all Americans to

prosper—in Bill Clinton’s words, to make globalization a win-win proposition. Clinton did support NAFTA, but he argued in a speech before a union audience that I helped to write that there would be strong labor and environmental standards, and a new improved safety net at home—crafted so that those adversely affected by trade would not be permanent losers.

The Clinton-Gore program of 1992 included such progressive measures as worker retraining and education, universal health insurance, an earned income tax credit for low wage families, revamped unemployment insurance, a more progressive tax system, stronger consumer regulation, and a new National Economic Council in the White House to oversee these reforms. It also included a progressive version of NAFTA—and a plan for greater public investment in rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure and support for development of alternative energy sources—both potential sources of job creation.

Unfortunately, only a few pieces of this program were carried out. Robert Reich became Secretary of Labor, but he was not terribly effective and by his accounts was checked at every turn by Robert Rubin, the Wall Street banker whom Clinton named to head the newly formed National Economic Council. Ira Magaziner ran the health insurance reform effort for First Lady Hillary Clinton—and as is now well known, that effort was handled ineptly by the White House political team and defeated handily by conservative forces. I was sidelined as an economics official at the Commerce Department, and soon left in frustration to become an ambassador in Europe and focus on security issues.

Clinton did pass the Earned Income Tax Credit, but had to focus on deficit reduction because of the budget mess inherited from the Bush administration. Rubin became his mentor, not Reich. And on NAFTA, the unions made a decision—a wrong one in my estimation—to oppose the agreement rather than to work with the Clinton White House to strengthen it. As a result, Clinton ended up passing NAFTA with Republican votes over the opposition of liberal Democrats in Congress, and of course, it was a much weaker agreement than we had proposed during the campaign. The loss of control of Congress in the mid-term election assured that the rest of the Clinton presidency would be one of damage control and guerrilla warfare against Newt Gingrich and his conservative forces rather than an era of progressive change.

Fast forward to the present—Democrats are in danger of repeating this history unless they think strategically about the international economy and frame the issue of trade in a progressive context.

As my friend Bruce Stokes, the leading trade journalist in Washington, D.C., writes in the February 28 issue of *Congress Daily*, only a comprehensive social safety net of universal healthcare, universal retraining and education, and universal unemployment insurance—will assuage Americans’ rising economic insecurity and stem the anti-trade sentiment among the American electorate. It is an important piece and I reprint it below. The message is clear—and one that the leading Democratic candidates should heed. A win-win globalization requires strong domestic programs at home.

Beyond Gotcha: In Search of Democratic Economics

April 17, 2008—Huffington Post

In the aftermath of the now famous “bitter” remarks by Presidential candidate Barack Obama, an observer of the Democratic primary season might have hoped for a renewed interest in proposals for making the US economy work better and fairer for working class and middle income Americans. Unfortunately, media interest remains focused on the trivial. The Huffington Post rightly called this week’s Philadelphia debate moderated by ABC “The Gotcha Debate.” Neither Obama nor Clinton seems able to rise above the din and remind voters of what is actually at stake in this election. John McCain did weigh in on April 15 with his most detailed economic speech—and it will have to serve as an indicator of what matters.

It is the economy, stupid—once again. Too bad that McCain is not the maverick in domestic policy that he claims to be. His prescription is little more than rehashed Reaganomics—tax cuts, and insufficient or nonexistent regulation, cloaked in lukewarm populist language. As the *New York Times* economics columnist David Leonhardt notes, incomes for middle income families in the US have remained stagnant for the entire Bush Presidency. Coupled with the threat of losing health care benefits and declining or absent pensions, facts on the ground underscore the growing economic anxiety and “bitterness” felt by many American workers and their families. Voters are looking to the Democratic candidates to speak to their economic insecurity and to their financial futures. The time is ripe for some kind of new New Deal—but where will it come from?

What is needed are both compelling language and a serious reform program.

My closest friends and colleagues know that I feel a bit jaded about such calls for progressive campaign programs. I have been through this before, and had my hopes dashed or at least severely tempered by political reality.

In 1983, I co-authored a book optimistically titled *A New Social Contract: The Economy and Government After Reagan*. The book analyzed the appeal and contradictions of Reaganomics and proposed a detailed Democratic alternative that we labeled a “new social contract.” I worked as an advisor on Gary Hart’s unsuccessful primary campaigns trying to promote these ideas, and then supported Mondale and Dukakis. Instead of a new social contract, we first got four more years of Reagan, and then four years of the George Bush Presidency, and more Reaganomics.

I had a bit more luck during the 1992 campaign when I was a senior advisor to Bill Clinton, and co-authored the campaign program *Putting People First*. It was, admittedly, a compromise document, but many progressive policy proposals were contained in it. During the campaign, the *Wall Street Journal* criticized me in a front page article and in subsequent opinion pieces as “The Liberal On the Clinton Bus.” Partly because of these attacks, President-elect Clinton chose not to include me in his economics team, and like my mentor John Kenneth Galbraith, I got sent abroad as an ambassador. The story of the Clinton administration’s political inability to pursue a significant reform agenda is well known—and is recounted in John F. Harris’ book, *The Survivor: Bill Clinton in the White House*, and

in *Clinton: The President They Deserve* by Martin Walker.

After almost eight years of Bush's neoconservative foreign policy and warmed over Reaganomics, one doesn't want to be too cynical. The damage to the country at home and abroad has been serious and requires much repair. I like to think that I am a political realist, and that I understand what kind of political reforms are genuinely needed (see the Huffington Post article, "Change That Really Matters"). The economic reforms that would bring a more equal and fairer economy have not changed too much from what was proposed in A New Social Contract or what Robert Reich, Ira Magaziner and I and a few others wrote in Putting People First back in 1992. What is needed are political vision and political skill, as well as a mobilized base of support for real change.

I wish that Barack Obama had read our work—or that Mark Penn, the lately departed campaign consultant for Senator Clinton's campaign, had consulted them before deciding on his primary strategy. Neither campaign has produced anything close to the far reaching reforms offered to the public in Putting People First.

I don't expect Presidential candidates to endorse any one set of progressive reforms—but I would like to hear the Democratic candidates talking about an Economic Bill of Rights for the 21st Century, not just technocratic neoliberal policies or cant about changing the atmosphere in Washington, DC and bringing us together.

Blame does not fall only on the candidates and the media's Gotcha game. The major labor unions have split their endorsements between Clinton and Obama, focusing time and money on the primary states rather than on promoting a new economic program for

the party and the country. Progressive groups such as MoveOn.org have endorsed candidates and mobilized members around the primaries while neglecting to engage them in a debate on what economic and social reforms the next president and administration might advocate.

The Democratic Party needs to remember its own history.

In his 1944 State of Union message, FDR told the nation:

"We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security..."

"We have accepted, so to speak a second bill of rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all, regardless of station, race or creed..."

Roosevelt went on to enumerate such economic rights as the right to a decent home, to adequate health care, to a job, and to a fair and competitive economy. His speech was based on research done by the National Resources Planning Board headed by economist Gardiner Means. FDR did not live to see his commitment to an Economic Bill of Rights enacted into law. The progressive programs that he and his Democratic successors Truman, Kennedy and Johnson did pass were attacked by the Reagan administration, and many aspects of the social contract between labor and capital and between citizens and their government were weakened or torn to shreds. Both Bush administrations continued these assaults on the programs and policies that served as the foundation of the New Deal and the Great Society—and the first Clinton interim did little to rebuild them or to construct a new political economic strategy for Democrats.

The era of globalization ushered in at the end of the Cold War requires a new social contract—at home and abroad—if America is to rebuild and to prosper as a democratic society.

It is no surprise that a huge majority of the American people believe the country is on the wrong track. They are looking to the Democratic Party both to rebuild our economic foundations, and to provide a policy road map for the 21st century. Are the party and its leadership, as well as party activists, up to the challenge?

One way to jump start the process would be for the Democratic Congress to pass a sense of the House and Senate resolution calling for an Economic Bill of Rights (The 1983 draft of such a resolution in A New Social Contract is available to be copied or updated.) At the Democratic National Convention in Denver this summer, the party should call for the next President to introduce economic and social policies that would make such an Economic Bill of Rights a reality for all Americans. And the party's Presidential candidate should pledge him or herself to making this the overriding domestic priority of the next Democratic administration. The party, its candidates and its leading grassroots groups should pledge to support the Economic Bill of Rights and aggressively campaign on it in the fall. In this way, we might have a serious debate about economic philosophy and the chance of enacting change that improved people's lives as the New Deal and the Great Society did in years past.

Rebranding America: How to Win Friends Abroad and Influence Nations

May 15, 2008—*Huffington Post*

This year's competitive race for the Democratic nomination for president has sparked renewed interest in politics and public policy on American campuses.

Occidental—the liberal arts college where I teach and where Barack Obama studied his first two years—is no exception. Oxy students have turned out for political forums, volunteered in primary campaigns for Edwards, Obama, Clinton, and other candidates, and some students are taking a new fall semester field course in campaigns and elections, working in presidential and Congressional races around the country. Our best students in the Diplomacy and World Affairs major devoted the spring semester to producing a report—*Rebranding America*—which offers innovative foreign policy prescriptions for the next US president. The report is now available free online at the student-run website: www.Oxyworldwide.com.

Occidental College has a long tradition of excellent teaching in international affairs. For over two decades, we have offered an interdisciplinary major in Diplomacy and World Affairs. Many of the college's graduates have gone on to lead accomplished careers as diplomats, journalists, academics, managers and even candidates for president of the US.

Since my return to campus from service as an ambassador in the Clinton administration, I have taught analytical courses on US foreign policy. I endeavor to teach my students to understand how and why decisions are made in the US government and how foreign policy is developed and implemented. I stress the importance of critical thinking and an

understanding of reality above ideology. I try not to tell my students what policy ought to be; I leave that to them as informed citizens to decide for themselves.

However, this spring at the urging of many students, I offered a prescriptive course on American Grand Strategy. The course's purview was the future—what US foreign policy ought to be for the new administration that will come to power in January, 2009. Students first looked at national and global public opinion studies, and concluded that in the years after 9/11, President Bush and his administration had squandered an enormous amount of international goodwill, lost considerable moral authority for the country, and approached the world with an US vs Them mentality. Such a divisive attitude rather than a levelheaded strategy did not make for successful foreign policy.

The students decided that it is vital for the next Presidential administration—whether headed by a Democrat or a Republican—to regain the moral high ground and take strategic initiatives: to lead globally rather than to dominate, to be a beacon more than a bull horn. In essence, the students want the US to be the good guys and to be smart about how we go about it.

The students divided up recent books on American foreign policy by authors from the Left, Right and Center of the political spectrum. Each student took a book and presented the seminar with a critical summary of the author's proposed strategy. Students then debated and agreed upon a Top Ten list of key issues that the next president will face in the world.

Breaking into teams, the students produced an analysis of the issues in each category, a definition of US strategic interests, and then proposed actions that the next president might take in his or her first month in office, first six months, and first year and beyond. Writing teams also produced an overall strategy statement, as well as a new Mission Statement for the US, designed to fit on a card that could go in the wallet of every American working in the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA and other branches of government.

The result of the students' work is the just released report *Rebranding America*. As a former diplomat and government official, I am impressed with the quality of the students' work and the breadth of their creativity and thoughtfulness in proposing concrete actions for the next president. As I promised my students, I have sent copies of the report to the foreign policy advisors for Senators Clinton, Obama and McCain, and to the chiefs of staff of the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committee. It has gone out to the distinguished members of Occidental's Global Affairs Advisory Board, and is posted on our Global Affairs website and on the student-run website: www.Oxyworldwide.com for all interested American and global citizens to read.

No one will agree with all of the students' recommendations—but the overall thrust of the report is clear: how the US can once again win friends abroad and influence nations. It is a road map for the next president to send a clear message that US is a nation worthy of international trust and capable of leading other nations in complicated and perilous times. I commend it to you for study, for discussion, and for action.

Waiting for Obama: The First Global Election

June 18, 2008—Huffington Post

Nothing could be more accurate today than the political chant from Chicago in 1968: "The Whole World is Watching." The level of interest in the upcoming US presidential contest is incredibly high, greater than at any time in post-Cold War history. This is due to the rapid decline of America's reputation abroad during the Bush administration and to the hope that Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama will restore America's image not with public relations, but with new internationalist policies.

In the past month, I have seen this phenomenon first hand. I have traveled to Syria, Peru and Bolivia as a speaker in the State Department's public diplomacy program. In each country, I heard from US embassy staff about how a record number of foreign journalists have requested travel to the US to cover the elections. I met with some of these reporters during my trips. I also encountered the same interest among students who attended my university lectures—and of course, business and government leaders wanted to know in detail what an Obama presidency might mean.

In Syria, for example, students at the elite public policy school at Damascus University were fascinated to learn that Obama's middle name is Hussein, and that his mother's second husband was a Muslim who took young Barack to live for years in Indonesia. These young Syrians seemed amazed that the United States which many in the region see as the Great Satan would actually nominate such a person to be president—and the thought that he might be the next president of the US was almost beyond belief. Of course, I got the not unexpected questions about whether Obama too would be under the thumb

of the Jewish lobby—but overall, a sense of hope and optimism seemed to prevail. Almost every Syrian whom I met felt that Obama might bring a new beginning to US-Syrian relations, and perhaps usher in a genuine and wider Middle East peace.

In Peru and Bolivia, students not surprisingly were focused on their own region. They wanted to know if Obama would pay greater attention to Latin America—perhaps rekindling the spirit of JFK and the Alliance for Progress. Government officials asked tougher questions about Obama and the Democratic Party's commitment to the global trading system, and whether US special interests might force Obama to close US markets to foreign goods. They also wanted to know what a President Obama might do about drugs in Latin America, and about the danger that some states, perhaps even Bolivia, might come to be dominated by narco politics and anti-democratic groups. Of course, they were curious about Obama's offer to meet with Venezuela's populist leader Hugo Chavez, and about how US-Cuban relations might change under Obama.

As a Democrat and former US ambassador, I made it clear that I did not speak for the Obama campaign (I supported Senator Clinton in the primary), but that I knew and respected him, that he had studied at Occidental College where I hold a chair in diplomacy, and that many of my friends serve on his foreign policy team. I told audiences that my students at Occidental, inspired by Obama's success, recently completed a memo for the next president entitled *Rebranding America* (available online at: www.oxyworldwide.com) and that copies were sent to Obama and his team, as well as

to McCain and his. Many students seemed intrigued about how they could “rebrand” their own nations.

In every talk and interview abroad, I made these basic points:

- There are significant differences between Senator McCain and Senator Obama on the two most important issues of the campaign: the economy and the war in Iraq. In the past two decades, US foreign policy has become highly partisan and emotionally charged—politics no longer stops at the water’s edge as it largely did during the Cold War—and it will matter a great deal, depending on which candidate is elected. If Obama becomes president, he will first focus on responsibly removing American troops from Iraq—one of his key campaign promises and a signature commitment of his political career. He will also have to manage and ameliorate the economic distress of the American people. On both these key issues, Obama and McCain are light years apart.
- The world beyond Iraq will not (and cannot) be ignored. Obama will be able to multi-task because he will have a reservoir of talent on call. All of his foreign policy advisors—notably Anthony Lake, Susan Rice, and Greg Craig—are experienced hands from the Bill Clinton administration. As I told foreign audiences and journalists, one of the secrets of the campaign is that all of Obama’s people are Clinton people—and this is a good thing. Under the leadership of Tony Lake, the Obama campaign has assembled a top notch group of professionals. On the Middle East, there are pros such as Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, and Robert Malley, among others, to call on. They are among our most experienced negotiators. On Latin America, there are not only the usual advisors from the Council

on Foreign Relations, but also younger scholars such as Russell Crandall from Davidson College, a leading expert on drug wars in the region. As President, Obama would have an impressive stable of very senior officials whose services he can engage. For Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense, think Senators Biden, Kerry, Dodd or Mitchell, and former General Wesley Clark. Think former President Bill Clinton as special envoy to the Middle East (perhaps in tandem with former British PM Tony Blair). Think Nobel Prize winner Al Gore as special envoy to renewed global warming talks. Think former Senator Sam Nunn as special emissary to Putin’s Russia, or former Centcom commander Admiral William Fallon as special emissary to Iran. And still on the bench to be deployed would be Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, and Strobe Talbott. The point is that President Obama would have a wealth of talented and experienced Americans at his disposal—an arsenal of “smart power,” the envy of any nation and any leader.

- Globalization is not Americanization—but it does require American leadership to work more fairly and effectively. Democrats are not economic nationalists or isolationists—but they understand that a sustainable globalization requires activist government inside each nation, as well as greater international cooperation. In my lectures at foreign business schools, I started off by explaining the good news and the bad news. The good news is that contrary to the beliefs of some anti-American voices, there is no American Ruling Class Committee in charge of pushing globalization on an unwilling world. The bad news, of course, is that no one is in charge of the global economy. We still live inside national borders, but the post-Cold War economy is global and is not constrained by

international borders, nor are the environmental and social consequences. This is the central political problem of our age. It is vital for the US to lead, but not dominate in making globalization more equitable and more environmentally friendly—both within our borders and for the entire world. Senator Obama seems to understand this challenge, although his economic advisors are less diverse than I would expect. He has some talented younger economists such as Austan Goolsbee from the University of Chicago, and he has brought in the predictable Clinton pros like Robert Rubin and Larry Summers. He still needs to reach out to other international economists who combine progressive views with practical experience—experts such as Sebastian Edwards at UCLA, Martin Carnoy at Stanford, Dani Rodrik at Harvard, Manuel Pastor at USC, and Jamie Galbraith at Texas. I also tell foreign business students and foreign business leaders that it is not simply a matter of waiting for Obama to come to power. They can start working for better economic and social policies in their own countries, and arguing for new regional initiatives in the Middle East and Latin America. If Obama comes to power, they will be ready with home grown initiatives to present to him and his team.

I have no idea if my public diplomacy—I also spoke last year in Kazakhstan, Chile and New Zealand, and I go to Australia this fall—is having much impact, but my message is always clear and simple: I come in peace and bring fraternal greetings from progressive Americans. Barack Obama seems to embody this message, and to carry with him in the upcoming presidential contest the hopes not only of Americans, but of citizens in almost every country of the world. It is a heavy responsibility, and not to be taken lightly. If Obama can prevail, and can govern with

strength, compassion and political wisdom, then he might turn out to be the first truly global president.

The whole world will be watching.

The Proper Use of Bill and Hillary Clinton

July 28, 2008—*Huffington Post*

While Senator Obama is on foreign tour this week, it is a good time to consider what factors will be decisive in the fall Presidential race.

The election will not be won on foreign policy—but it could be lost on it. That's why Senator Obama is visiting key countries in the Middle East and in Europe. He is shoring up his credentials as an American politician who can handle himself well with other foreign leaders. The trip is less about the nuances of policy, and much more about appearances—Obama must appear credible at home as commander-in-chief (an all important threshold for any presidential candidate). He must also demonstrate an ease and familiarity with the vital issues facing the US abroad. I have little doubt that he will accomplish this task.

The foreign press is already anointing him as the next president. In Germany, headline writers use phrases like "The Black Kennedy" and "The Next JFK." The Iraqi government has even been telling the press that they favor Obama's plan for responsible withdrawal of American troops from their country.

All he has to do is not make any silly mistakes. The trip will mainly impact American voters as photos and soundbites. Obama will be seen as a serious and centrist Democrat on foreign policy—and one who is welcomed by our allies around the world. No amount of carping and nitpicking from the McCain campaign will undercut this message.

It is safe to predict that foreign policy will be wash for the two candidates. Both Obama and McCain will be viewed as ready to be

commander-in-chief and as a plausible American leader in foreign affairs. This, in fact, will be a victory for the Democrats, since the "national security deficit" in voting usually greatly favors the Republican nominee. Obama and his highly competent political and foreign policy team are doing everything right to narrow that margin to a draw.

The campaign will be won or lost on the home front—on domestic issues, above all on the state of the economy and the need for healthcare reform. On these issues, Obama and the Democrats have a sizable lead in the polls and a "natural" advantage in a time of economic distress. As Paul Krugman and other commentators have declared, the election seems to be Obama's to lose.

How might that happen?

The answer seems clear: if the Democratic party is not united behind Obama in the fall, it is still possible that he will lose enough working class white votes and perhaps female votes to be defeated narrowly by McCain in such swing states as Michigan, Florida and Ohio. It might happen because his economic message is still weak, and because of personal characteristics beyond his control: his race and ethnicity or his sometimes arrogant manner. It would be a tragedy if it's because of his failure to unite the party.

The antidote to this outcome is simple: he has to bring Bill and Hillary Clinton in from the cold and make them essential parts of the fall campaign and his campaign strategy.

It would seem obvious from Al Gore's race in 2000, that ignoring the assets that the Clintons bring to presidential campaigning is

a recipe for disaster—for snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. It would be both sad and ludicrous to repeat that experience.

Bill Clinton is the only Democrat since FDR to win two presidential elections. He is the greatest natural politician and campaigner of his generation. He knows the political landscape of the US better than anyone in the party—and he is willing and ready to help. Obama waited almost until the last minute to put in his first call to Clinton—and Clinton responded favorably with warm words, letting the hurts of the primary be bygones. But Obama has not followed up on that contact. Clinton is already sending signals in the press that he has not heard from Obama nor from the campaign.

Hillary Clinton has demonstrated that she is one the best political campaigners in the Party, and certainly the strongest female presidential contender in the modern history of the Democratic Party. In spite of some errors of campaign management, she fought a tough and adroit campaign, and only narrowly lost to Obama. She demonstrated an ability to motivate not just females, but most importantly, the white working class base of the Democratic Party.

After their initial sit-down hosted by Senator Feinstein, Obama and Clinton have not been talking. Obama has not been reaching out to her as he should. Of course, there are issues between the campaigns such as retiring her debt or who speaks when at the convention in Denver—but those are minor matters best left to aides. Obama should be talking to Hillary every week about the campaign, and making clear to her that he wants her and her husband fully engaged come the fall. He should also be clear in his own mind that this is the right thing to do. These two individuals have a wealth of political knowledge that he

should tap, just as he is utilizing former Clinton aides for his foreign policy team.

Obama should not only ask their advice. He and his campaign should give Hillary and Bill each a plane and put them into the field in the fall, letting them speak in battleground states on economics and healthcare, over and over again with the simple message that McCain is McBush and a vote for him is a vote for more of the same in the economy and the death knell for healthcare reform. Healthcare.

A sign of a truly transformative political leader is how he works with his rivals and how he deploys his assets in the field. Obama has rivals who want to support him, and they are assets that are necessary for victory. Leaving Bill and Hillary Clinton on the sidelines in the fall would be a monumental mistake in political judgement.

The message for Obama and the Democratic Party is straightforward: Yes, We Can—but not without the Clintons.

Clintonism Without Clinton—It's Deja Vu All Over Again

August 6, 2008

In the dog days of summer, I and my dogs take comfort in the wisdom of Yogi Berra. As that great Yankee catcher and philosopher said, "It's déjà vu all over again." That's just how I feel seeing the photos and reading the reports of Barack Obama's economic gathering this week. It's as if I am rerunning a movie of the 1992 Clinton economic summit in Little Rock. There are Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, Bob Reich, Laura Tyson, corporate statesmen like Warren Buffet, Republicans like Paul Volker and Paul O'Neill, a couple of token labor leaders and few if any progressive economists or activists huddling with our Democratic candidate to discuss economic hard times. And in the White House we have another President Bush who is passing along a record deficit. "White House Predicts Bush will Leave \$482 Billion Deficit" reads the *NY Times* headline. Even if Obama wins, he will feel immense pressure to be fiscally responsible, tackle the deficit and put universal health care, economic regulation or labor law reform on hold or postpone it altogether. Just like Bill Clinton.

It feels like Clintonism Without Clinton.

Reading the profile of Obama's political rise in Chicago, I found myself saying to friends that it reminds me a lot of Bill Clinton's career, although in an urban context.

Other political observers are also saying how much Barack Obama reminds them of Bill Clinton. Both are smart, articulate, give good speeches, and display political ability mixed with ambition and pragmatism. Maybe Barack is channeling Bill, and he doesn't need to talk to him (as I advised in a previous column). And maybe it's just plain weird (an unfair) that

Hillary Clinton was defeated by a younger version of her own husband.

It just doesn't matter, as Bill Murray chanted. Obama is the Democratic candidate and I want him to win—but let's also talk about what to do after victory is won. Remember the Robert Redford character in *The Candidate* who wins his Senate race, asking forlornly, "What do I do now?" There are answers.

I have expressed myself already that to win the election Obama needs to sharpen his economic message and deepen his economic agenda, and there is no need to repeat the obvious. However, I strongly advise that progressive groups should be planning for victory, as well as working hard to elect Obama. It is often during Transition periods between administrations—in late November and during December—that key decisions are made about personnel and policy, usually out of the view of the media and after public interest in the campaign has greatly diminished. This was certainly the case in Clinton's first term, and even in Bush's when he decided to bring in Don Rumsfeld to counter the influence of the more centrist Colin Powell.

I ran the Labor section of the Transition for the first Clinton term and saw first hand how unprepared the labor movement was for winning and then governing. They had no serious candidates for key positions in a Democratic administration—even for Labor Secretary (and they got someone who didn't believe strongly in labor unions!)—and no forward looking agenda for economic reform. Other progressive and public interest groups were just as bad. Ralph Nader had all but

endorsed kooky Jerry Brown in the primary and spent most of his time personally attacking Bill and Hillary Clinton. He then behaved badly in his meetings with new White House staff, and gave no thought to lobbying for the appointment of progressives in the administration. As a result, the influence of the labor movement and progressive groups both on the inside and the outside of the Clinton administration was marginal at best. There is a lesson here for the major labor unions like SEIU and AFSCME that are going to go all out with their members and their treasuries to elect Barack Obama, and for groups such as Public Citizen, MoveOn.org and others, especially environmental organizations.

Yes, by all means, do everything you can to elect Obama and a Democratic Congress—but devote some staff time and strategic thinking to planning for after the victory. Personnel determines policy more than campaign speeches and position papers, so have a list ready on November 5 of qualified individuals who might be considered seriously for top positions in government and for whom you will lobby the Obama administration to appoint. For example, at least one economist on the Council of Economic Advisors should be a labor economist; progressive economists should be appointed not only to the Labor Dept., but more importantly, to the Treasury Dept. and to the Office of the US Trade Representative; pro-consumer and labor experts should be appointed to leadership positions on all regulatory bodies. And have a reform agenda of executive decisions and priority legislation in hand. Line up sponsors and advocates in the Senate and House, and start pushing the agenda with the White House the day after the Inauguration. To neglect these tasks and fail to think strategically about winning makes all the hard work in the fall to win the election only feel hollow later.

After all, as the candidate himself said, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.” Not the one, but the ones.

Russia and the West Under Clinton and Bush

September 20, 2008—*Huffington Post*

The guns of August are heard again.

The unexpected, sudden and brutal incursion by Russian troops into the small, former Soviet Republic of Georgia, has provided hawkish voices in both the US and Russia with an opportunity to talk tough. Republican nominee John McCain has had a field day, asserting that “We are all Georgians,” and calling for strong measures to throw Russia out of international institutions. Russians leaders have barked back about protecting the country’s national interest, and showing that Russia can no longer be pushed around by the US. Russia seems to be back on the scene, emboldened by its oil wealth and a revived nationalist ethos.

Is a new Cold War brewing? Will US-Russia relations be a determining issue in the upcoming Presidential race?

I first studied Russian my senior year in high school, and went on to take an intensive course in the language at Yale. When asked why I chose to study Russian, I have always answered, “Because I wanted to end the Cold War.” And then I joking add, “And, of course, I did, but it look longer than I thought.” As a child who grew up with “light drills” in grammar school—we had to hide under our desks when the alarm bell sounded and close our eyes so as not to be blinded by the nuclear blast—I never thought the Cold War would end. After the Russians successfully launched Sputnik, I was one of a group of six graders in my school sent for special summer classes in math and science—and I continued in the “Beat The Russians” program in junior high and high school, designed to help the country catch up and surpass the Soviet Union. And I can

remember gathering in the Culver City high school quad during the Cuban Missile Crisis, convinced that world leaders were about to cause a nuclear armageddon.

At university in the 1960s, I studied Russian, took courses in Russian history and politics, and had the opportunity, courtesy of the National Defense Education Act, to go on a study tour of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1965. I traveled the country, meeting Russian students, and seeing first hand the demoralizing and dehumanizing effects of the Soviet system on the Russian people. I liked the people, but hated the system they had to live under.

I found the Cold War depressing, not exhilarating, and the proxy wars fought under its global system like Vietnam were a cause for deep sadness because they brought out the worst sides of our own country. When the Cold War finally ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, I was overjoyed. I don’t want to see it start up again, even an ersatz version.

When I need a reality check on things Russian, I talk to a Russian—my friend Sergei Plekhanov, now a distinguished professor of politics and international affairs at York University in Toronto. Back in the day, Sergei was deputy director of the Institute for the Study of USA and Canada, the leading “liberal” think tank in Moscow, and he served as one of Gorbachev’s top advisors on reforming and opening up the Soviet Union. When Yeltsin came to power, Sergei was squeezed out, and like many Russian democrats he found a home abroad—first at Occidental College, and then permanently at York in Canada where he is a regular

commentator on Canadian television and an advisor to the Canadian parliament.

In summers, Sergei guest teaches at UC Irvine in the OC (I call him the smartest man in Orange County, at least for three months a year). Yesterday we spent the day together, walking along the beach at Corona Del Mar, and sitting on his porch over neo-Russian cuisine—a light vegetarian borscht and grilled salmon—and talked about the current crisis in Georgia. I recalled that the hero of Mikhail Lermontov's famous novel Hero of Our Time—the cool Russian dude Pechorin—found the Caucasus region remote and strange. Sergei agreed. It is not a land of simple black and white, nor of right and wrong.

Sergei told me that the Russian and international media is rife with conspiracy theories about why Russia attacked Georgia now. One theory is that hawks in both the US and Russia wanted it to happen, to justify their own positions. As one storyline goes: Dick Cheney encouraged the Georgians, telling them that they would soon be welcomed into NATO and that the US would protect them. Emboldened, the Georgians try to take back South Ossetia, the Russians respond harshly and play the bad guy, and then the US responds with heated rhetoric (but not military action), giving the Republican Party a hot button issue for the presidential race. The hawks in the Kremlin don't mind obliging. They would prefer McCain in the White House to Obama.

As President, McCain would come out swinging against Russia, justifying the analysis that the Kremlin hardliners have of US motives—to keep a weakened Russia down forever and encircle it with new NATO states. Facing off against President McCain would make it easier for Russia to suppress its own liberal voices, increase military funding, and take a tougher stance on their “near

abroad”—ie the former Soviet states on Russia's border.

Obama as US President would be more problematical for Russian hawks. His election might stir democratic yearnings throughout Russian civil society, and his administration would use more carrots than sticks in engaging Russia. It would be much harder for the Kremlin tough guys to paint an Obama administration as simply anti-Russian.

Russians love conspiracies, even my learned friend Sergei. After he had related the above explanation and even more unlikely scenarios, I countered with my argument of Bush incompetence and lack of interest. To be sure, Cheney and Bush have enjoyed rubbing Russia's nose in the dirt, and have pushed every advantage—negating the ABM treaty, trying to build an anti-missile system first in the Czech Republic and now Poland, luring former Soviet States into token troop support for Iraq, and pushing NATO expansion as rapidly as possible. At the same time, Bush says Putin is a guy he can work with, and then ignores the continuing suppression of civil society in Russia, including the gangsterization of the economy. Bush lets Russia get rich on oil while making no effort to change US energy policy. The so-called Russia expert in the Bush administration Condi Rice turns out to be one of the worst national security advisors in post-war history, and as Secretary of State, doesn't seem to have a clue how the Russians would react in Georgia.

Sergei added some evidence to my case by pointing out that Rice had done her Phd thesis on the Czech military in the Warsaw Pact, not exactly heavy lifting. As Sergei noted, the role of the Czech military was to get out of the way when the Russian army moved in (as the world saw in Prague in 1968).

I argued that Bush and company don't care what happens inside Russia, and haven't bothered to see Russia as a threat (until now, perhaps). It's not a conspiracy, just gross incompetence.

Sergei and I also found ourselves, as 60 somethings do, reminiscing about the early reform days in Moscow when I would visit his Institute and we would talk about transforming the Soviet Union into a democratic society. We recalled that I had brought Ralph Nader to Moscow for meetings that Sergei organized with leading Russian reformers like Anatoli Sobchak, and that Nader had advised Sobchak and other Russian liberals not to go overboard for Shock Therapy. Ralph was saner then (before his Presidential aspirations turned him weird), and gave good advice that they needed to have a competent and honest government in Russia to go along with a transition to a market economy. If you simply marched down the Milton Friedman path of markets argued Nader, then you would end up with Wild Capitalism, or worse, the kind of gangsterism that plagues the Russian economy today. The Russians dismissed Nader's warnings, and the subsequent US governments in Washington, DC did little to assist in the process of change that was to come in Russia. For many Russians, the Shock Therapy and the subsequent rise of the oligarchs that came under Yeltsin have been viewed as punishment that the West netted out to them for being Communists all those years.

I did what I could myself to help Russia towards a more democratic path. In the 1992 Presidential race, I arranged for Bill Clinton to deliver a major speech to the Council on Foreign Relations on the West's responsibility to provide economic assistance to Russia. In fact, Clinton's speech forced then President Bush to announce a major aid package to

Russia that he had been resisting. However, once in office the Clinton administration did not do enough to provide Russia with economic and technical assistance. There was no Marshall plan for Russia, as I had argued for during the campaign. Hampered by Republican opposition in Congress, Clinton chose to focus first on getting the nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union under control (an important and necessary step), and then on expanding NATO, an issue that still rankles with Russia today. NATO expansion came not because Clinton wanted to surround a weakened Russia. It happened, I believe, for two reasons. One was the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and European inaction at the ethnic cleansing that took place afterwards. Clinton needed an international vehicle to use in the crisis and NATO was it. The other reason was the personal interventions of Eastern European dissidents turned presidents who had great moral standing—namely, Lech Waleska and Vaclav Havel. Both made impassioned pleas to Clinton not to let their countries remain outside western institutions like NATO and the EU.

I and others in the Clinton administration worked hard to make it clear that Russia was not NATO's enemy (I wanted to extend NATO membership to Russia herself, but could find little support for that position inside the administration). At the Clinton-Yeltsin summit in Helsinki that I initiated and organized, Russia agreed to join in a Russia-NATO council at NATO headquarters in Brussels. As US Ambassador in Finland, I took every opportunity to develop closer US-Russian ties. I hosted conferences on western economic investment in Russia, promoted environmental clean up projects in Murmansk, and went out of my way to be friendly to the Russian ambassador. I also arranged NATO fellowships for young Russian thinkers who had worked at Sergei's Institute

(one of them is now the Russian charge d'affaire in Washington, DC; he is an Ossetian).

Vice President Gore co-chaired the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission during the Clinton years, and he worked hard on a number of civil society projects. But during the 2000 campaign, the Republican critique of Clinton-Gore was simply that Clinton and Gore had been "too close" to Yelstin and the Russians—whatever that meant. With Bush's election, we found that it meant the US should treat the Russians like losers and bad guys and not to pay much attention to what happens inside Russia, which is now turning out to be a self fulfilling prophecy.

What happens now?

The good news is that Russia is no longer governed by an expansionist ideology, and in fact, it is not a strong country, but still a weak one. Outside of the gleaming new hotels in Moscow, the country's economy is a one trick pony. It has oil and natural gas, but produces little else that the world wants or needs. It's economy is ridden with corruption, and will only get worse. Western investment continues to be scared off (my friend Bill Browder who ran the largest western investment fund in Russia had his visa revoked and his companies illegally seized), and even western energy firms are being driven out. This is not a recipe for real long term economic growth. And its civil society continues to be weakened not strengthened by the authoritarian governing ethos in the Kremlin. Health and environmental problems are extreme, and go unaddressed. Keeping the public quiet with nationalist military outings like the recent one in Georgia do work for awhile, but they don't make Russia into an authentic super power. Of course, Russia has nuclear weapons, but so does Pakistan and it is not a super power nor will it be in the near future.

The bad news is that John McCain might be able to use Russia's military adventure in Georgia to help him win the presidency. If so, this will move us closer to making Russia (and sadly, the Russian people) back into our enemy. Only hawks and the military industrialists in both countries will be served by such an outcome. An Obama administration would try to find a way to resolve the Georgian crisis without turning Russia into a permanent enemy—and it would re-engage with Russia at all levels.

The guns in far off Georgia this August are one more reason why so much is at stake in the fall election.

What's At Stake: The Future vs The Past

October 31, 2008—*Huffington Post*

I watched the first presidential debate last week with friends in Sydney where I was on a State Department speaking tour to explain US politics to Australian audiences. One of my co-viewers was Don Russell, a former Aussie Ambassador to the US and chief political advisor to the former Labor Prime Minister. Don espoused the theory that the determining factor in the presidential race will be the extent of HD penetration in American households.

Russell argues that John McCain looks really, really old in High Definition, and that the more voters who watch the next two debates in HD, the better Obama will do. It's an intriguing theory, and probably not without some merit—and some enterprising reporter or reader might want to check out the actual extent of HD coverage.

Watching in HD or not, John McCain does look like the old guy in the race, and Obama the fresh face. For some older voters, McCain's age is a plus—the experience factor. He's been around Washington, DC a long time, and might know more than newcomer Obama; certainly, that has been one of his campaign's main arguments.

For me and many others, it is not just about McCain's age (although surely it is of added concern with Sarah Palin standing on deck in the VP circle). It is about his ideas and what he stands for. The motto of the 2008 election should be: It's The Future, stupid.

Of course, the economy is the most single important issue now in voters' minds and the political struggle in DC over the financial bailout and the drop in the stock market only heightens public concern. How voters

perceive each candidate's response to the financial crisis—how each man acts, how each explains the situation, and how each proposes to reform the economy once in the White House—will largely determine who is the next President of the United States. But more is at stake in this contest than simply reining in the excesses of Wall Street.

The 2008 election is a choice between the past and the future—and the choice will affect America's fortunes at home and abroad for generations to come.

John McCain is more than the oldest candidate to run for President. His ideas are old—stale, inadequate to the times, and proven failures. Yes, he is a man of some honor and courage who wants what is best for his country—but to listen to him in the first debate is to hear how stuck he is in the past. He spoke of Eisenhower, of Vietnam, of the aging and irrelevant Henry Kissinger, and most frequently of Ronald Reagan. As a self-declared "foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution," he is a firm believer in Reaganomics—the belief that cutting taxes and cutting government regulations will lead to economic growth and greater prosperity.

Recent events have made clear (if it wasn't already self evident) that such policies lead to greater inequality, stagnant wages, and greater economic volatility—a prescription for a weaker not a stronger American society. The stated beliefs of his choice for VP Sarah Palin are backward looking: anti-women, anti-science, anti-progressive.

In foreign policy, McCain wants to put the failed Bush doctrine on steroids. He calls for a League of Democracies that would bypass

the UN and exclude Russia and China, two nations that need to become stake holders in the international system, not excluded from it. This is a recipe for repeating the mistakes of the 20th century—first economic depression, then world war. His position on Iraq: stay until “victory” is achieved, is simply repeating the mistakes of Vietnam. In some ways, he is simply refighting the Vietnam War in a different setting—bogged down in sand instead of mud.

While in Australia, I had dinner and a long talk with Paul Keating, one of the most successful Prime Ministers in recent decades. Keating led the reform of the Australian economy, dramatically opening it to the world while building a world class social safety net to allow Australians the security to compete globally. He also started new initiatives in Asia, and built up the country’s ties to China while maintaining good relations with the US. He helped President Clinton see the value of APEC, and the utility of gathering the leaders of Asian and Pacific nations each year for group and bi-lateral talks.

Keating despairs for America and our role in the world if McCain is elected. In a recent poll, almost three-quarters of Australians want Barack Obama to be the next President of the US.

Some of my liberal Republican friends (a dying breed to be sure) argue that the “real John McCain” will emerge once he is in the White House—and that he will turn out to be a genuine liberal Republican. Unfortunately, there is little evidence in this campaign and his stated positions to support that thin reed of hope. Check out Jeffrey Goldberg’s article “Why War is His Answer—Inside the Mind of John McCain” in the October issue of *The Atlantic* for a detailed exposition of why the optimists for McCain are misguided. All of his key foreign policy advisors think that Bush has

been right about the world, just that he didn’t execute his unilateralist policies well enough. McCain will somehow do it better.

On the domestic front, McCain might be checked by a Democratic Congress, but I doubt that he has the flexibility of Governor Arnold to reinvent himself as a Green reformer. McCain will get angry facing off against Pelosi and Reid, and the result will be stalemate and drift. McCain’s erratic behavior last week during the financial meltdown—one day the economy is sound, the next day he wants to fire the head of the SEC, the next day he “suspends” his campaign and returns to inject Presidential politics into the negotiations. His intercession seems to have made matters worse on Capitol Hill, not better—a likely preview of a McCain Presidency.

As a former supporter of Senator Clinton, I firmly believe that Barack Obama understands, while McCain does not, that America’s future is at stake in this election—and that Reaganomics at home and aggressive unilateralism abroad are not the right answers.

If Obama is elected President to govern with a Democratic Congress—one in which conservative Southerners will no longer dominate— there will be an historic opportunity to stem the tide of rising inequality in American society, to reform the American economy, to regulate it fairly and smartly, and to build a social safety net for the 21st Century that includes portable pensions, universal health care, early childhood education and community-based educational reform, and greater scientific innovation, especially in creating more jobs in the “green economy.” Such reforms would strengthen America to move forward in this globalized world without impoverishing the majority of our citizens. Progressive groups and an

activist Congress would be essential partners in creating what I call a New American Compact—in effect, a new New Deal.

Abroad, the election of Obama would be greeted not only with a sign of relief, but with a great deal of hope. Polls at home and abroad show that citizens around the globe believe that an Obama Presidency could help significantly to restore American moral prestige and leadership in international affairs. Certainly, the election of a President of African-American descent would signal that the US has finally moved beyond its racial past, and provide an outpouring of optimism about the nature of American society. As President,, Barack Obama would have to made difficult decisions about matters of war and peace, climate change, and global economic reform—but I am convinced that he would look to the future not the past in making his choices, and that he would deploy a considerable stable of talented Americans, including Al Gore, Bill Clinton, John Kerry and others, to help him find allies to craft a global New Deal—to be an FDR for the 21st Century.

If elected President, Obama might signal his intentions by canceling the traditional Inaugural parties and balls for wealthy contributors, ask Hollywood celebrities not to jet in to DC, and instead turn Inauguration week into a national conversation on Ideas for Change. He could ask a new generation of innovative thinkers for their ideas on the content of a new American Compact, and energize citizens through online forums, and encourage them to participate with Congress in reforming and renewing American society from DC and Wall Street down to the neighborhoods of Main Street.

My optimistic, California-bred nature sometimes kicks in and I get excited by the possibilities, once more, of building a better America—but I am realist. It will take a lot of

hard work, and lot of cleaning up the mess created by the incompetence and mendacity of the Bush-Cheney era. Electing Obama offers the promise of a better future. McCain will only continue the sad ways of the past. The choice seems very stark and very clear: the past vs the future.

The Road Ahead: The First 100 Days and Beyond

November 18, 2008—Huffington Post

The 2008 campaign is heading to a decisive conclusion. Barack Obama is sailing towards a triumphant finish on the winds of economic distress and financial crisis. Obama has demonstrated a steely coolness under fire, while John McCain has turned into a caricature of himself as an old man, out of touch and losing it. Temperament does matter in a President—and on that score, Obama has won hands down.

I am hearing from friends abroad who assume that Obama will be the next US President (as I do), but who worry that the optimism and hope that characterized the earlier days of the campaign have been diminished by the economic crisis and by the angry tone of McCain's ads and rallies. They worry that Obama might inherit a damaged, angry and divided country, and not be able to reverse what they see as a nation in decline. A former British Admiral with whom I worked on NATO peace keeping asked me if America's best days are over and whether Obama can really reform our debt-ridden economy, and free ourselves from Iraq.

An Australian writer in country to film a documentary showed up at our house to interview friends who had gathered for a debate party. The informal working title for the project: "Is America Screwed?" The filmmaker asked guests to consider whether the US is going downhill, and whether Obama can repair the damage that Bush has done to the country at home and abroad. Can an Obama administration reform the American economy and renew the promise of American life as FDR did with the New Deal?

As a native Californian, I tend to be optimistic—and I have always been a New Deal

Democrat at heart and in practice, as much as possible over the years. Of course, I vote for giving hope another chance—but we should not leave matters simply to chance. Bold action will be required of President Obama and his administration at home and abroad—and we should all expect it of him. He will need to show boldness in his selection of his team and boldness in the initiatives that he lays out in his first 100 days in office and beyond.

He will need to take immediate action on numerous fronts—and, equally important, explain to the nation (and the world) what he is doing and why he is doing it. FDR used folksy fireside chats to restore public confidence in government by explaining his decisive steps such as shutting down the nation's banks for a short "holiday" with language and metaphors that the public could easily grasp. Obama will need an analogous communications strategy of his own—not a fireside chat nor a rap, but perhaps a tutorial model that works well with his cool and calm demeanor. He will have to go beyond the hapless Oval office speeches and Rose Garden reassurances of Bush, and find his own effective and emotive way of speaking directly to the American people.

What should he talk about?

On the economic front, he might well be faced in January with a deepening recession, and he will have to explain the imperative of an economic stimulus package—one with immediate goals of restoring credit, restarting economic activity, shoring up the housing market, and reestablishing confidence that a competent leader is in charge in the White House. He can talk about nation-building at

home—about the need to signal priorities in the stimulus package with investments in infrastructure (highways, bridges, schools), in alternative energy sources, and by providing economic help for the unemployed, and for those faced with losing their homes or their jobs.

Obama should also make clear his commitment to reforming Wall Street and the financial sector of the economy. His choice to be Treasury Secretary and how he explains the person's mission will be an early indication of his willingness to find individuals to serve in an Obama administration who combine competence with a willingness to protect the public interest—first, in carrying out the financial rescue package already passed by Congress, and then in supporting smart regulation of financial markets. A first order of business might be the appointment of a Presidential commission headed by the Vice President or by a populist like Senator Byron Dorgan to examine the most effective ways to regulate hedge funds, derivatives, credit default swaps and other arcane financial devices. Such a body could be tasked with looking at foreign regulatory models in Canada and Australia as well as at European proposals for a new regulatory regime in the US—one that protects the public interest while not stifling genuine enterprise. Like the 9/11 Commission, it should have a clear (and short deadline) for reporting back to the President.

Obama's appointments to the Council of Economic Advisors, to the office of US Trade representative, and to Secretary of Labor will also signal the strength and depth of his commitment to reforming the economy. His first Federal Budget as President will spell out national needs and priorities and provide him with an opportunity to start making good on his campaign promises to reform the tax system towards greater equity, to build a

better social safety net for the globalized economy, and to invest in a "green" economic future.

Bold action and strong Presidential appointments will also be required for dealing with problems beyond our shores. Obama will need to appoint a strong team of his own to lead in foreign and national security areas. He might select someone like Senator Chuck Hagel, a Republican who opposed the Iraq War, as Defense Secretary. He does not need nor should he keep on any of Bush's people. There needs to be a fresh start.

On day one in office, President Obama should make good on his campaign promise on Iraq by calling home Central Commander David Petraeus for talks about a timetable for withdrawing all US forces from that country. Only a clear ultimatum to the Iraqi government will push them to get their act together and to understand that they are going to have to take responsibility for governing the country. At the same time, he should announce a major diplomatic "surge" in the region—calling for a conference of all involved countries including Iran and Syria to plan for regional security and stability. He might also send a high level envoy to Tehran—perhaps Vice President Biden or former top military leader like Admiral Bill Fallon or a former Defense Secretary such as Bill Perry—to initiate talks with Iran. These talks might lead to a grand bargain between the US and Iran not unlike the Shanghai accords that President Nixon signed with Chairman Mao—i.e., an agreement to disagree but to engage and talk on all issues, and to normalize relations in order to do so.

Obama could also announce a special envoy to the Middle East to signal his commitment to an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement—someone like Bill Clinton or Sam Nunn. He should also announce that he is sending a US

ambassador back to Damascus, and that the US supports the ongoing talks to establish permanent peace between Israel and Syria. As part of this action on the Middle East, he might also explain that the US government is not at war with the Muslim world. He should drop the usage of "The War on Terror," announce the closing of the prison at Guantanamo, and state that the US does not condone torture by any American soldiers or intelligence officers. Such actions taken in the first weeks of an Obama administration would be an unmistakable signal to all the countries of the Middle East and to Muslim nations around the world that a new government is in charge—one that will take a more nuanced approach to resolving the deep-seated problems of the region, and one that will listen to its friends and allies, and not fear talking to its adversaries.

As part of the First 100 Days, President Obama could also send a strong message about global warming. He could announce naming someone such as Al Gore to be his special envoy to lead the US team in Copenhagen to consider the follow-on to the Kyoto Accords. Whatever innovative research the US develops on alternative fuels in the future (and Obama is committed to this path), it will not come on line soon enough to begin significantly slowing the environmental damage caused by climate change. There has to be an international accord with more than platitudes. A world recession might make such an agreement even more difficult to achieve, but the problem is not going away. President Obama could signal both his understanding of the seriousness of the situation and communicate it to the public in an Obama "tutorial."

Such a bold, progressive 100 days will, of course, bring a reaction from the losers in the election, especially from right-wing Republicans and retrograde conservatives in media and business. In addition to standing

up to the attacks and pressing ahead, the Obama administration and his allies in Congress should not stop exposing the crimes and misdemeanors of the Bush administration. Efforts such as the hearings led by Congressman Henry Waxman and Government Operations committee should be stepped up, not stepped down. Investigations into possible illegalities in the Justice Department, Interior Department, and other agencies should continue. The public needs to know what went on during eight years of Radical Republican rule—and it needs to know how much damage has been done by the Bush "hollowing out" of the Federal government. It will be a huge job for the Obama administration to restore not just public confidence in government, but real competence inside the government. This also will be required in the areas of Homeland Security and Intelligence where politicization of intelligence and security matters and disdain for professionalism led to disastrous policies that squandered billions of dollars and severely damaged the reputation and interests of the United States. Understanding the extent of the damage is essential to a good repair job.

Neither the first 100 days of an Obama administration nor the first four years will proceed smoothly and easily. There will be political battles won and lost, mistakes made, and unexpected events that aid or impede reform. On a plane ride from the East coast, I re-read a terrific book, *The Defining Moment*—FDR's First Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope by Jonathan Alter, the *Newsweek* columnist and skilled author. In it, you can find an exciting story of hope restored to a nation by a courageous President, Franklin Roosevelt, who took bold action, and who brought the public along with him by telling them what he was doing and why.

But FDR did not do it alone, and he had no plan set in stone. He was progressive and experimental—above all, he acted. And he had allies in the country at large, as well as in the Capitol. Grass roots groups such as the Townsend clubs in California pressed for old age pensions, and the CIO union organizers risked their lives to mobilize workers. In Congress, leaders like Senator Vandenberg of Michigan (a moderate Republican) and Senator Wagner of New York (a pro-labor Democrat) fought for and won far-reaching legislation that went beyond FDR's initial positions and broadened his horizons of the politically possible. Pick up Alter's book and dip into it. You will find it instructive and inspiring.

With WWII, Dr. New Deal became Dr. Win the War, but FDR and his team did not stop at defeating fascism and nazism. They also took bold action to win the peace. FDR's deep seated commitment to realizing Woodrow Wilson's vision and his adroit political maneuvering led to the creation of the United Nations. His team of economic advisors helped to establish the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Obama's team will be have to reform these institutions and perhaps create new ones for the new century.

The lessons of the New Deal are clear: A reform-minded, progressive Democratic President governing with a Democratic Congress in a time of crisis can reform and renew our country, and at the same time, provide strong global leadership. History shows us that as a nation and as a people we have the capacity to renew our system of government and to play a leadership role in the world. Decline is not inevitable—and it certainly is not here yet. The damage of the Bush years can be repaired and reversed—but it will take bold action on the part of President Obama, and all those who join in

him the effort in and out of government. It is not a project for the timid nor faint of heart.

The Shout Heard Round the World: Obama as Global Leader

December 22, 2008—Huffington Post

On election night, when the TV returns made clear that Barack Obama had been elected the 44th President, a great shout of joy erupted from the hundreds of Occidental students gathered in the union. Faculty living near campus said they could hear the roar from the crowd, ecstatic that their candidate (and an alum of the college) had won. A shout of joy could also be heard around the world.

In almost every country, the reaction to Obama's victory was one of rejoicing and relief that Bush and his unilateralist gang were finally history. Expectations for Obama run absurdly high. As CNN headlined this week, "Obama poised to rebrand America." My students welcome the challenge since they issued a report last spring titled *Rebranding America* (available online at: www.oxyworldwide.com) and they fully expect Obama to bring real change to America's role in the world.

For eight years, I have taught a course every fall at Oxy on the search for a politically sustainable post-Cold War foreign policy for the US. Neither Bill Clinton nor George Bush managed to craft such a new American Grand Strategy. While Clinton understood the realities of globalization, he had to spend too much time clearing up the debris of the Cold War, especially the disintegration of Yugoslavia—and he was opposed at almost every step by Republicans.

George Bush was worse. He tried to use the tragic events of 9/11 to construct a new Cold War under the rubric of The War on Terror. As a consequence, America's standing in the world—until Obama's victory—has been at an all-time low. Relations with countries like Russia or entire regions like Latin America

have drifted or deteriorated. As the "War President," Bush divided the country at home. He leaves President-elect Obama with a myriad of trouble spots—Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran—that require Presidential attention on day one in office. However, Bush's neglect of problems like global warming and his failure to make the War on Terror into the unifying principle of US foreign policy, provides both opportunity and challenges for Obama.

As President, Barack Obama has the chance to craft a politically viable post-Cold War foreign policy—one that can gain widespread support at home and acceptance (and participation) from the international community. If he does, he will set the course of global affairs for the 21st Century, much as FDR and Truman did for the second half of the 20th Century.

The most pressing matter for Obama is to clean up Bush's mess in the Middle East and South Asia, and not get bogged down in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan to the exclusion of other priorities. He will need a tough, smart team to devise and implement regional solutions that include Iran and Syria, and other countries that Bush confronted but not engaged. He will need to build public support on both sides of the aisle in Congress and from the American public for a "diplomatic surge," as well as for any short term military actions. He will have to accomplish this while leading the nation out of recession. Not an easy task, even for a man who is portrayed by the media as a composite of Lincoln and FDR.

Rather than going from crisis to crisis abroad, Obama can grasp the historical moment to

build a globalist policy that is politically sustainable; reality-based; practical and cost-effective; moral—based on American values of democracy and human rights; and environmentally conscious. Of course, it will also have to be pro-American—to serve America’s immediate and long range interests—but it can be offered with wise leadership and diplomacy, not bullying or hectoring, and it must include making America a better example of a more decent and greener City on a Hill.

From first hand experience as an American ambassador, I know that we can promote American values without moral absolutism or nationalist cheer leading—and recruit friends for our side. In Finland, I operated in a nonpartisan manner. I hosted events at the official residence for Henry Kissinger and Rupert Murdoch, as well as for John Kenneth Galbraith and Hillary Clinton. I organized a celebration of the Helsinki Accords and hosted former President Gerald Ford who had signed them. I also arranged a fishing trip and meetings on world poverty for Jimmy Carter.

I actively promoted American products, but tried to do it with a light touch, serving California wines, microbrews from Boston and San Francisco, Ben & Jerry’s ice cream and chocolate chip cookies at official functions. I was a champion of American popular culture, cutting the opening ribbon at Planet Hollywood-Helsinki, praising the X-Files on Finnish TV, riding in a classic Impala to open the American Car Show, throwing out the ball at the Finnish American Football championship, and welcoming Tina Turner, Johnny Cash, Jackson Browne, Wilson Pickett and the LA Philharmonic at concerts.

I also worked hard to make the Finns who were officially neutral in the Cold War into closer partners of the US. I went on overnight

winter maneuvers with the Finnish army, took military leaders to visit an American aircraft carrier in action off Bosnia, and flew supersonic in an F-18 Hornet purchased by the Finnish air force. I testified on NATO before the foreign relations committee of the Parliament, and arranged for Defense Secretary Bill Perry to take a sauna with the Prime Minister.

When a venue was needed for the crucial meeting between Clinton and Yeltsin, the President of Finland offered us the Finnish White House saying, “Here are the keys. Use the house and do good work.” The summit was a success. Later, President Martti Ahtisaari played a key role in bringing an end to the conflict in Kosovo. This year, Ahtisaari received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Many other Clinton ambassadors took a similar approach, not lecturing but listening, engaging and trying to find areas of common concern, bringing host countries into initiatives where we shared the burden of international leadership. It was the way American diplomacy ought to be practiced—in an open manner, explaining American values and positions, but seeking common ground.

With Obama’s election, every country in the world wants to engage with the US. However, an active, globalist American diplomacy must serve a clear foreign policy agenda. President-elect Obama has already been signaling some elements, as he did in key speeches during the campaign. From what he has said, we can start to see an outline of a new global American foreign policy.

The Green Agenda. In a video address to international environmentalists gathered in Los Angeles this week, President-elect Obama made clear his commitment to taking climate change seriously. He announced that

he will have observers at the next UN climate conference in Poland in December, and that as President he will “help lead the world to a new era of global cooperation on climate change.”

Making US foreign policy more “green” will, of course, involve more than attendance at international conferences. There will be tough choices to make about the follow-on to Kyoto and the crafting of a new set of green trade policies including a rethinking of the Doha Round of trade protocols. American embassies over time can become centers of environmental consciousness, with diplomats provided hybrid and electric vehicles, and other energy saving devices. American diplomats can seek out and promote joint research projects with universities and businesses on green technology. In rapidly growing countries like China, India, and Brazil, there will be engagement on environmental regulations and on clean-up technology.

The Obama administration can find and promote the “best practice” in environmental regimes around the world, learning from innovators in Scandinavia and Western Europe or in Australia and Asia, and championing that knowledge. President Obama might call for an International Environmental Corp modeled after the Peace Corps to engage young people from around the globe. There will also be opportunities for private sector partnerships. American diplomats can encourage green venture capitalists and social entrepreneurs. A new international environmental agency—a kind of Green NASA for the planet—might be designed and founded with American leadership. There can be a global green New Deal, but it will only happen with American leadership.

The Freedom Agenda. The US has always favored expanding democracy around the globe. Obama made explicit in a speech to the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs that he understands this history, and believes in promoting democracy. However, the US has not always been good about how we export our way of life. In the Cold War, we got in bed with a lot of bad guys in the name of fighting Communism—but that rationale no longer applies.

How Can the US Best Promote the Spread of Democracy?

In the Clinton administration, national security advisor Tony Lake offered the concept of Democratic Enlargement—and the US strongly supported adding new members to the EU and NATO, based on the idea that bringing nations into these democratic alliances would expand the “zone of stability” in Europe and help the countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltics to become stable democracies and prospering market economies. This strategy worked well in post-Cold War Europe, but it was much harder to devise a similar strategy for democratic enlargement in the Middle East or Africa.

After 9/11, Bush announced his Freedom Agenda which linked the invasion of Iraq to the building of a democratic nation in the Middle East that would have a demonstrative effect and somehow promote the spread of democracy in other Arab nations. False analogies with the reconstruction of defeated Germany and Japan were offered and there was a lot of political rhetoric without follow-up on the ground nor much support from the international community. As Jim Traub writes in his new book *The Freedom Agenda*, the US “must spread democracy, just not the way George Bush did it.”

How does America promote democracy in failed states like Afghanistan or the Sudan? And what about Egypt or Saudi Arabia, or North Korea when it finally collapses or Cuba after Castro dies? Will democracy be exported, spread or expanded to these nations? All of these matters will arise on Obama's watch. How might he tackle these issues? Here are a few clues and a few operative principles:

(1) Lead by Example. Domestic reform will be the Obama administration's number one priority, but it is also an important aspect of foreign policy. We are not currently number one in the world in voter turnout, provision of health care, K-12 education, environmental protection or early child care programs—and certainly not in mass transit. Obama can use activist public diplomacy to highlight his domestic reforms to show that we are practicing at home what we preach abroad.

(2) Work With Others. The Obama administration will engage with nations in the Middle East and Africa, and help, when asked, to assist in building and strengthening democratic institutions—and President Obama will speak out when faux elections make a sham of democratic ideas—but he won't preach. He will seek through diplomatic engagement to make progress on the ground.

(3) Fight Terrorism Smarter. Terrorism is a tactic of the weak, aimed at disruption and symbolic statements, but it is not war. The Obama administration will, of course, protect Americans at home by strengthening Homeland Security, and improving coordination and cooperation between intelligence and police agencies—but the President can do that without sacrificing civil liberties. Obama understands that we can work quietly and effectively with our allies and their security services and police to undercut

and round up terrorist cells without branding the effort as a religious war or as a battle for western civilization. We don't have to use undemocratic methods to protect democratic societies.

(4) Create New International Agencies. President Obama has spoken movingly about Darfur, and he understands what his advisor Samantha Power calls "the problem from hell"—how to intervene inside a country to stop genocide. President Clinton says that he wishes he had acted to stop the killing in Rwanda. President Bush continues to send special envoys to Darfur, but can't take action. It is not an easy matter. The US can't be the world's policeman, but it can help to create an international police force that is strong, effective and ready to be deployed for humanitarian interventions. Such a force might be created inside the UN structure or separately outside it, and it can be tied to existing regional security forces such as NATO or the African Union—but the US cannot be the sole provider. It will only work as an international effort, but one that is America led.

After the fighting stops or after a nation collapses, there needs to be a vehicle to deliver more than just relief. We have plenty of public and private international relief organizations. President Obama will have the opportunity to devise and lead in the creation of a new international nation-building agency. It would house experts in all areas of reconstruction, and international teams of experts would be ready for dispatch. The knowledge to do nation-building exists. (Former US diplomat Jim Dobbins has compiled case studies and hand books at RAND.) What is missing is a delivery system. The State Department and the Pentagon also have expertise, but as with humanitarian intervention, the US cannot and should do not take up this burden alone.

THE GLOBALIZATION AGENDA

Barack Obama will take office in the midst of a deep recession. Along with moving on a domestic stimulus package, he will have to take leadership of the international economic agenda. He and his economic team will need action plans for reducing the volatility of international financial markets and increasing the transparency. This might involve a new international regulatory regime along with an international transactions tax to finance it. Obama will also have to coordinate stimulus packages internationally, reaching beyond the traditional G-8 nations to the larger G-20 grouping that includes such emerging economic powers as Brazil and India.

The inherent contradiction of globalization is that the world economy transcends nation states, but politics is nation-based. The task of international regulation and coordination is thus not easy; leading is more difficult than simply putting an army into the field or calling a diplomatic conference. Beyond the problem of the current recession, rests the deeper question of how to make the global economy more stable and more equitable.

President Obama understands that as with promoting democracy, promoting globalization requires domestic reform at home. Americans who voted for him will not support new trade agreements nor new international economic initiatives unless they feel protected against the ups and downs of the market—so building a better and stronger social safety net in the US is a necessary part of the strategy.

One of the lessons of globalization is that national governments matter more than ever. A sustainable global economy requires honest and competent governments to uphold rights and standards for labor, to protect the local environment, to insure safe

products, and to invest in education, health care and infrastructure. This is one of the messages that Obama can explain to the world community—both in word and in deed.

Obama can be the teacher and the leader who transcends 20th Century ideological debates about government versus market, by explaining that both are essential to society. He can be the American President who demonstrates that globalization is not just Americanization.

At a lecture I gave last week at Pomona College, an international student asked me if expectations for Barack Obama's Presidency were too high—if he might not fail and disappoint the millions around the world who joined in the collective shout of joy. Of course there will be missteps along the way as Obama himself has cautioned—but Obama, I firmly believe, understands that this is not simply about himself, and that the load need not rest solely on his shoulders. That's why he is assembling a strong and talented team to govern with him. That's why he is reaching out to former opponents like John McCain and Joe Lieberman, and most likely to some Republicans like Defense Secretary Bob Gates. That's why he is discussing the Secretary of State's job with Hillary Clinton. And that's why his staff is already calling on those who volunteered in his campaign to send in ideas for action and to join him in his reform efforts. He is trying to adopt a transformative style of leadership that encourages participation, and burden-sharing—of both the credit and the blame. It's the smart and politically savvy way to govern.

I don't know if I convinced the student. After all, he could not vote for Obama himself. Obama was not elected by the world's citizens. He is the American President after all—but he is, in many respects, also the world's President. What he does will matter to young

and old across the globe. The world, like America, is waiting for him to lead. It is a daunting and exhilarating thing to behold as the American Century gives way to the first truly Global Century and Oxy's Barack Obama as the Global President.

An Obama Holiday: What to Give a Progressive President and His Team

January 5, 2009—Huffington Post

What do you get a President-elect for the holidays who will soon have the weight of the world on his shoulders? Advice books, energy food, sports gear? It's a predicament.

After January 20, Barack Obama will be in official gift land. He will have to declare almost all gifts from friends and foreign governments, as will his family. This December 25 will be the Obama's last normal family Christmas for years. How to help him celebrate?

Proud of its alum, Occidental College has already sent the Obama family a gift package of Oxy merchandise, including Snoopy/Oxy t-shirts, pompoms, Oxy teddy bears for Malia and Sasha, Oxy hoodie sweatshirts, Oxy basketball shorts, and an Oxy basketball t-shirt for Barack. The Oxy basketball coach, Brian Newhall, who played pick-up ball with "Barry" Obama in the 80s, is sending an official team jersey with the number one on it and Obama's name on back. Obama played basketball informally at Oxy, but did not make the team. As Oxy professor Eric Newhall says: "The greatest contribution Occidental has made to American democracy was to help Barack Obama decide that his future wasn't in basketball."

Not only has Occidental sent this gift package, including an Oxy leash for the new First Puppy. The campus store will soon be marketing a line called "BarOxyWear." These Obama approved items will include Oxy/Obama caps, "Yes We Can" logo tank tops signed by Barack Obama, Oxy '83, t-shirts reading "Barack Rocks," an infant diaper cover saying "Change We Need," Hope and Change themed shirts and hoodies, a classic t-shirt in Oxy black and orange with the

quote: "Everything Barack needs to know as President, he learned at Oxy."

Of course, the school will make sure that the Obama family receives an ample selection from the "BarOxyWear" line. His Cabinet members and White House staffers would no doubt want their own cool Oxy shirts and hats. You can order gifts for them—and for the Obamanauts in your own family—online: www.oxy.edu. Go to bookstore on site. Items will be on the website next week, available until the store closes on December 18, and again when it reopens on January 5.

WHITE HOUSE STIMULUS PACKAGE

Beyond the b-ball outfits for White House pick-up games, President Obama and his team will need a constant supply of munchies for meetings, and to share with important Congressional visitors and foreign officials. The Mars company traditionally supplies M&Ms candies to the new President, packaged in boxes with the White House logo and the President's name. Visitors to the White House mess covet them. No doubt the tradition will continue with Obama, but there are other energy treats that are needed:

- Jackie & Eddie's Cookies—These are the best ginger and brownie cookies made in America, and they come packed in eco-boxes printed on recycled paper, using soy inks. The entire package is 100% compostable, including the shrink wrap. Jackie and Eddie grew up near Occidental where their dad studied, and they baked these cookies as kids with their mom. During the Clinton administration, these were a staple of the White House kitchen (Don Henley of the Eagles first hooked

President Clinton on them). In the spirit of Democratic continuity—and because they are so darn good—White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel should make sure that the supply never runs out. Even those who don't get jobs in the Obama White House, can order them for the holidays online at: www.jackieandeddies.com.

- Fran's Chocolates—On the campaign trail, Barack was introduced to the killer smoked salt chocolate caramels produced by Fran's Chocolates of Seattle. He is said to be addicted. Help him share his good taste by making sure that the White House never runs out. You can also share his habit with Obama supporters on your holiday gift list by ordering online: www.franschocolates.com
- Sees Candy—This confectionary company is one of the first companies purchased by Warren Buffet, the billionaire Obama advisor and supporter. Growing up in Culver City, California, I toured the factory and regularly ate the product. As an ambassador, I had my mother regularly ship me cases of Sees soft center chocolates to serve at official dinners and give as gifts to diplomats. I hope that Warren Buffet will see his way to providing the Obama family and the Obama White House with a supply of Sees, and perhaps even donate cases to new ambassadors who will represent Obama and the US abroad. You can engage in chocolate diplomacy this season at: www.sees.com

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

One of the privileges of being President is that you can ask just about any entertainer in America to perform at a White House event. President Obama will have his choice of live entertainment, but what should he and his Cabinet have on their I-Pods? My vote is for

tunes by progressive artists. Last week, I attended a concert given by Jackson Browne and his friends to benefit the relief organization Operation USA. Jackson is one of my heroes. He is always there for good causes; he writes and sings great music (and he has an honorary doctorate from Occidental). My first music choice for an Obama stocking stuffer is "The Very Best of Jackson Browne." Also at the concert was Ry Cooder, a fantastic musician and musicologist. Into the stocking goes Ry's latest on Rhino Records, "The Ry Cooder Anthology: The UFO Has Landed." Joining Ry and Jackson on stage at the Santa Monica Civic was Bonnie Raitt, the greatest slide-guitar player of her generation. Bonnie has been on the forefront of progressive causes, and she has been generous in working with neglected black musicians. On to the Presidential I-Pod should go her album, "The Best of Bonnie Raitt." Jackson also brought on stage 39 year old Ben Harper, a multi-talented songwriter/singer/musician, adept at the blues, gospel, folk and rock. Like Obama, Harper comes from racially mixed parentage. I can see him performing gospel songs at the White House from his album, "There Will Be Light," then singing a folk duet with Bonnie Raitt as he did at the Civic. Any of his albums would be good stocking gifts for the Obama household.

You can share the joys of good music with your Obama friends by giving these albums as holiday gifts—and you can tell President Obama that we hope to see these progressive artists performing at the White House in 2009, and perhaps receiving honors at the Kennedy Center during his tenure.

BOOKS TO GOVERN BY

It is a pleasure to have a President-elect who reads books and cares about ideas. Bill Clinton, of course, was a voracious reader. During the '92 campaign, I had to hustle to

keep him supplied with serious tomes on economics and with good mysteries. I don't know about Obama's taste in detective fiction, but we do know that he read some weighty books on the campaign trail. His interest in Doris Kearns Goodwin's history, *Team of Rivals*, about the Lincoln Presidency has become a frequent topic of pundits. Obama also mentioned that he had perused Jonathan Alter's book, *The Defining Moment: FDR's First 100 Days*, and Jean Smith's history of FDR. The *New York Times* reported that on his final days of the campaign Obama was reading *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden*—written by his Oxy classmate, award-winning journalist Steve Coll.

As President, Barack will have less time than during the campaign to read books. Mainly, there will be endless briefing papers. Therefore, I am suggesting only two books to go under the Obama family tree this Christmas for him:

- *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s*, by two Colby College professors, G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot. The experience of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson is perhaps more relevant to Obama's situation than the New Deal. The book describes how an incredible amount of progressive legislation was passed by Congress in the 1960s—an achievement made possible by progressive elected officials working closely with liberal Presidents, spurred on by progressive social movements and social critics like Rachel Carson, Michael Harrington, and Betty Freidan. I have given a copy to another of my local heroes, Congressman Henry Waxman. I hope that President-elect Obama might read it, and share it with his Cabinet and with Democrats in Congress.

- *Bound Together* by Nayan Chanda, an Indian journalist and publications director at Yale's Center for the Study of Globalization. Chanda tells the story of humankind through the lens of globalization, and explains that it is not a new occurrence; it is the human condition. We all share a common African heritage (Obama's is more recent), and in the 21st Century we are reconnecting via the internet, CNN, jet travel, global commerce, and sadly, terrorism. Chanda's book is inspiring, based on deep historical research and careful analysis. It should be the emblem for the Obama administration—a perfect gift to give every foreign visitor to the White House.

As President, Obama will also need books for relaxation. President Kennedy was a fan of Ian Fleming, and helped to popularize James Bond. I won't press my favorites on Obama, other than to recommend the Soho Crime series. All of the books are well written and set in different locales around the world. One of his friends in Chicago might give him a selection for Christmas. If it turns out that the President-elect doesn't favor mysteries, there is always the historical novel. In that genre, few American writers can compete with Gore Vidal. His novel *Lincoln*, part of his history series, is a pleasure to read and instructive about the burdens of power. A complete set of Vidal's historical novels might fit nicely in an upstairs bedroom at the White House.

I hope that members of Obama's Cabinet will receive *The Liberal Hour* and *Bound Together* as holiday gifts, along with their Transition briefing books. For the national security/foreign policy team, I recommend two books: *What Terrorists Want* by Harvard professor Louise Richardson, the single best book on terrorism, its forms, purposes, and how best to respond to it—and *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran*

by Hooman Majd, a Tehran-born journalist who has traveled the country and had access to many of its leaders. Majd's book provides a "feel" for the country lacking in academic and think tank studies, and explains the complexities that will face the Obama team in working out any rapprochement with the Iranian government—no easy task.

For Obama's economic team, I suggest receiving *The Predator State* by James K. Galbraith, a progressive economist at the University of Texas. Not an Ivory tower academic, Galbraith worked as a Congressional staffer on the financial rescue of New York City and the bailout of Chrysler Corporation in the '70s. He is also an expert on the Federal Reserve. His book is a reminder that the philosophy behind the deregulation of financial markets runs deep in the American polity, and that only genuine reform of the financial system will prevent future meltdowns. Even if Galbraith is not called upon by President Obama to advise him, at the very least his book should be gifted to Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and White House economic advisor Larry Summers.

For the Secretaries of Labor, Education, Health, Housing, Transportation, and White House staffers on domestic policy, a highly useful gift would be: *The Measure of America: The American Development Report 2008-2009*, by Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis and Eduardo Borge-Martins. This study applies the statistical and analytical methods of the UN Development Reports to the United States. It contains a host of data on economic, social, political and environmental issues while highlighting comparative rankings in three core areas of human welfare: living a long and healthy life, having access to knowledge, and enjoying a decent standard of living. The US, sad to say, is not number one in most categories. The

report also discusses government policies that can improve the American quality of life. It should sit on the desk of all domestic officials and serve as both a benchmark and a roadmap for progressive reforms in the Obama administration.

FLICKS AND POLITICS

The US film industry is a global business. Movies are a leading export. Talented directors, writers and actors from around the world aspire to success in Hollywood. Almost all modern American Presidents have been movie fans. There is a screening room in the White House and the studios provide the President with first-run movies to show his family, friends, and political supporters. An invitation to Bill Clinton's Friday night movies at the White House (complete with pop corn and soda) was a much desired thing. No doubt, President Obama will continue the tradition—but before he has to host "official" movie parties, I hope that he has the chance for one or two date nights in Chicago with Michelle (even if the Secret Service has to tag along). If he can get away, I first recommend *Slumdog Millionaire*, the best movie of the year, and an exemplar of the global film. It sports local Indian actors, a Scottish director, a plot out of Dickens constructed around the Indian version of an American game show, and it's set in Mumbai. Then, he and Michelle might catch *Australia*—the movie—a sprawling, kitschy epic narrated by an Aboriginal boy in which the good guys endure hardship and win in the end. The motto of the film might be: *Yes We Can*.

As for DVD gifts, we know that Barack likes the acclaimed HBO series *The Wire*, and a friend should make sure that he has a complete set to take with him to the White House. I also hope that he is given the other great HBO series *Deadwood*. One of the producers and directors is Davis

Guggenheim, the Academy Award winning filmmaker who made the bio-pic for Obama shown at the Democratic Convention. *Deadwood* is a parable on the importance of government in taming unfettered and lawless capitalism. For the Obama stocking, I would select *Advise and Consent*, one of the best movies about American politics and a reminder that Congress expects to be consulted; *Wall Street*, Oliver Stone's best non-war movie—is the only movie that comes close to showing the relationship between making money, ethics and the impact of financiers on Main Street. Finally, our family favorite, the space western, *Serenity*. The message of this sci fi classic is that people aren't perfect, and that social systems must allow for human frailty and foibles—for the good and the bad in human nature. It illustrates the law of unintended consequences, and the danger of ideologues in power.

DOING GOOD

The Obama campaign team is trying to find ways to use its data base of over 10 million emails and its cadre of volunteers. There are house parties for Obama organizers scheduled this month to discuss issues and future activities. I would hope that the Obama folks simply ask their supporters to donate some time or money to an NGO. Everyone who voted for Barack Obama might make a small donation this holiday season to an organization that they are certain delivers goods or services to those who are hurting. My personal choice is the relief organization Operation USA (www.opusa.org). There are many others.

God Bless President-elect Obama, his family, and his team—and Holiday Greetings to all of the readers of the Huffington Post.

Bye, Bye Bush, Hello Barack: A Door Opens in 2009

January 19, 2009—Huffington Post

It's hard not to be excited by the change from Bush to Obama. The 60s activist in me couldn't help but smile at the sight of Bruce Springsteen backed by an African-American choir opening the Inaugural Concert on the Mall—and later, Springsteen brought Pete Seeger on to lead the massive crowd in singing the classic, "This Land Is Your Land." It was a far cry from Ricky Martin headlining the Bush Inaugural eight years ago.

To celebrate the passing of my Yale classmate into history, my wife and I plan to attend a preview of Will Ferrell's new one-man play, *You're Welcome America*, when we are in NYC. It will be a fitting send-off. To prepare for the Obama administration over the holidays, I have been doing my duty for Occidental College where I teach—promoting my colleague Roger Boesche who was Obama's mentor and taught him courses on American political thought, and appearing myself on NPR to publicize "BarOxyWear," the line of clothing and collectibles the campus store is selling. I've also done a little serious reading, as well watching the NFL playoffs and going to see the remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (where the threat to humankind's existence is ecological not nuclear).

I highly recommend Adam Cohen's new book, *Nothing To Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America*. It is a fitting companion to Jonathan Alter's *The Defining Moment* which I recommended in an earlier article. Cohen does an excellent job describing the backgrounds and personalities of key FDR policymakers, and how they worked with the President to pass significant reform legislation during the first 100 days of the New Deal.

The book also reminds us how important Congress and a reform-minded President's relationship with powerful members is to accomplishing change. Of course, having an active citizenry and populist social movements to lobby Congress and the White House helps too—and Cohen does not neglect these influences.

I was reading such books over the holidays because I am still hopeful about progressive change in America—and I want President Barack Obama to preside over a new New Deal for the country, although one adapted to the 21st Century. I am also a realist; even in the midst of an economic crisis, change in a progressive direction is not preordained.

What should we expect from Obama and his team?

On the economic front, I am confident that Congress will pass a significant economic recovery package—to use the Obama administration's preferred phrase. Let's call it StimPac for short rather than ERP. Whatever the name, the \$800 billion package will contain a lot of vital and much needed public investment in traditional infrastructure like roads, bridges, and schools, and in new environmental and digital age projects. As part of Bill Clinton's economic team in 1992, I had argued for a large public investment package, but the idea did not survive the politics of the day. Obama is better prepared and better positioned than Clinton was to achieve a serious down payment on a public investment strategy. As Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor, was fond of saying: "If anybody opens a door, one should always go through. Opportunity comes that way." The economic crisis is just such an open door. We

can be certain that Obama and his Congressional allies will make good on the StimPac initiative and have it on his desk to sign by early February.

It is less clear exactly how Obama's economic team will tackle the ongoing bailout of the financial system. Bush's team at Treasury has been content to hand out billions of public money to banks large and small which seem content to protect their balance sheets rather than begin lending again to businesses and consumers. Much more will have to be done to reconfigure the bank bailout—expect an announcement on this front in Obama's first days in office—and in the months to come, there will have to be new regulatory initiatives on the scale of FDR's securities and banking reform legislation. Look for Congressman Barney Frank and Senator Kent Conrad to play key roles, as well as Congressman Henry Waxman. One of Obama's friends from Chicago days, law professor Cass Sunstein, will also be a key player in regulatory reform. Sunstein is the author of an important book, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More Than Ever*, as well of his earlier study *The Cost of Rights* (with Stephen Holmes). He is one of the most original and progressive thinkers whom Obama brings with him to DC—and he might well deserve a chapter in some future history of the Obama team's inner circle. I also expect that Vice President Biden and his chief economist (the first time a VP has had such a post) progressive Jared Bernstein will weigh in on matters of structural reform and economic justice.

There will also be a lot of damage repair to do in the first 100 days and the first years of the Obama administration. It is hard to underestimate how much damage Bush and his gang did to the country, but we certainly know that they severely undermined the rule of law. Attorney General Eric Holder and his

team will have an immense task to do restoring the credibility and competence of the Justice Department—and not only on the domestic front. On his first day in office, President Obama will most likely announce his intention to close the prison at Guantanamo, and Holder will have to figure out the legal and logistical ramifications of making that happen. To help him, Holder should be able to recruit the best and smartest lawyers of Obama's generation, just as FDR and his supporter Felix Frankfurter recruited top legal minds for the New Deal. I've already had numerous former students with law degrees contact me about recommendations for joining the administration.

For a reality check on Obama's environmental appointees, I asked my friend Peter Barnes what he thought of them. Peter is the author of *Climate Solutions: What Works, What Doesn't and Why*, and *Newsweek* recently labeled him one of the most influential policy intellectuals in the country. A longtime activist in solar power and a board member of GreenPeace International (as well as the founder of the first progressive credit card company, Working Assets), Peter usually fears for the future of the human race. He is most likely to go see a movie like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and conclude that we have passed the "tipping point" in ecological damage to the planet, and that not even a visit from an extraterrestrial eco-super being can save us. But Peter is optimistic about Obama's choices to lead the EPA and the Department of Energy and to serve as top science advisors, so I am confident that Obama has people in place who understand the seriousness of global warming and the dangers of continued reliance on fossil fuels. Whether or not his administration can create a Green New Deal at home and abroad remains to be seen. Much will depend on how much support the green dream team can

muster from citizens and from environmental groups. This is one area where we will see what good political use can be made of Obama's millions of names from his campaign network.

On the global stage, Obama is already an international hit before taking office—but expectations are incredibly high. He is expected to end the war in Iraq, win the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, capture Osama Bin Laden, forge a final peace between Palestinians and Israelis, engage with Iran, stabilize Pakistan, manage the rise of China, open relations with Cuba, and reenergize US involvement in Latin America—and perhaps, bring about immigration reform and make Mexico more stable and democratic. He is also expected to lead internationally on climate change and reform of the international financial system, and make globalization a win-win proposition for the world's poor. This is a daunting prospect even for a man who has already been compared to Lincoln, FDR and JFK. In spite of the good will afforded him at the outset of his Presidency, it's going to be a rocky road—and much harder than leading reform efforts at home.

Obama has a valuable asset in his new Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She will be one of the stars of his administration—and not because she will personally resolve all the conflicts listed above. I believe that she will become a voice for global social justice, especially for women, as well as a firm advocate of US national interests abroad. She will expand the role of the women's office at State and bring with her more talented diplomats to carry the message. She is also confident enough as a politician to bring in strong, smart, experienced diplomats like Richard Holbrooke and Dennis Ross to deal with the international repair work that needs to be done. Holbrooke will oversee huge

challenges in Pakistan, Afghanistan and South Asia, and Ross will do the same for the Middle East. Both will have to help settle ongoing wars through aggressive diplomacy and engage key regional players like India and Iran in post-conflict settlements. It is smart politically of Obama and Clinton to use these "tough guys" to do this work. Without them or individuals of their caliber, the President and the Secretary of State could spend all of their time simply getting out of the holes dug for the US by the Bush administration and have neither time nor energy for any future-leaning initiatives in Asia, Africa or Latin America.

Finally, I am hopeful because Barack and Michelle Obama and their family seem to be approaching these very serious tasks with a sense of optimism and fun. The White House will once again be a place of culture and of outreach to the citizenry of the nation—not a fortress of the War on Terror with timeout for personal work-outs. Even Obama's workouts will be social—testing his friends and allies on the basketball court (as an Occidental professor who still plays competitive b-ball, I have volunteered for a pick-up game when he visits the campus). And for the first time, the African-American communities of Washington, DC and of neighboring cities in Maryland and Virginia, will have a President who knows their lives and who will be a true neighbor not a foreign presence in their midst. That certainly is another part of this truly new New Deal for America.

It is a new day for America. Let's make the most of the door that has opened. Bye, bye George Bush, hello Barack Obama.

Hoops Rule: The President and the Hard Court

February 1, 2009—*Huffington Post*

The White House needs a new basketball court and it's not in the stimulus package.

I was in New York City recently and bumped into Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. I congratulated her on the stimulus package, but refrained from lobbying her about a glaring omission in the \$800 billion legislation—the absence of a public works project to build a new indoor basketball court on the White House grounds.

Regular basketball games for President Obama and his team are essential to the nation's recovery. Daily workouts on the court are important for the president's physical and mental health. The nation knows that Obama is a serious player. He was a varsity player at Punahou in Hawaii, and played in a the rough-and-tumble noon game at Occidental ("good herky, jerky motion, goes left to the basket," says Oxy coach Brian Newhall who played with Obama in college). Barack played in Chicago and frequently on the campaign trail. According to his brother-in-law Craig Robinson, it was on the court that Obama passed muster as a mate for sister Michelle. Now the coach at Oregon State, Robinson took the aspiring suitor out for a rigorous game of hoops, and reported that Obama was a stand-up guy who could play the game and maintained his cool on the court. No cheap fouls, no temper. A scholar-athlete who could be a decent member of the family, and perhaps more.

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I have been playing basketball since I was very young, first in pick-up games at my local park, then in high school as co-captain of the

Culver City Centaurs. It has always helped me keep my balance in life. I also learned the diplomatic uses of sports. In the 1980s my wife was elected Mayor of Santa Monica. I began playing ball with a group of city police at a local church, and encouraged our liberal city attorney and city manager to come along. It was a serious game, famous in local lore for the time that I brought a young politician from Arkansas to play (lousy shooter, but aggressive under the boards). I became good friends with detectives and patrolmen, and when issues arose at city hall, we knew each other and could talk easily and frankly.

When the lanky guy from Little Rock became president and asked me to serve as a US ambassador, I took my passion for basketball abroad. I organized an embassy team. We played every Saturday in a high school gym in Helsinki, entered a city tournament, defeated the Russian embassy for the title, and took home a trophy which I placed in the waiting room of my office. My son Anthony, a top player at UC Santa Cruz, came to Finland to play professionally. At one of his games, I joined in a free throw shooting contest at half time with the local mayor. Press coverage was not unfavorable—similar to Obama sinking a three pointer when he visited US troops during the campaign, except that his shot was shown around the world on CNN (and I missed my last shot from the charity stripe).

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Presidents have often played sports. Teddy Roosevelt liked to ride in Rock Creek Park and exercise vigorously. Eisenhower played golf. Richard Nixon bowled (and had an alley

installed at Camp David). Jimmy Carter famously jogged. Clinton jogged and played golf but never tried basketball again as president. George W. Bush rode his mountain bike and had a daily workout. But these were all relatively solitary (or perhaps elitist) sports. Basketball is more social—an urban game—and it has become a truly global sport. For years, Michael Jordan, not the US president, was the best known American in China. World class players from all over the globe try to make the NBA. Having a US president who is a serious hoopster is great public diplomacy—but the man needs a decent place to play. The current outdoor court on the White House grounds doesn't cut it.

When FDR was elected president, there was no pool at the White House. He had gotten in the habit of swimming regularly to strengthen his leg muscles, but he knew that it would be bad politics to spend public money for a new indoor pool, however important to his health, while millions were out of work. Instead, a subscription was taken up by the New York Daily News from its readers, and the pool built in 1933, funded by small private donations. Having the people build it for the president was an ideal solution.

I was discussing this with Jonathan Alter, author of the book *The Defining Moment—FDR's First 100 Days* (which Obama and his staff have reportedly read). I said to Alter that we should ask the NBA to pay for a new indoor court at the White House. Alter said, not the NBA owners—instead, ask the NBA Players Association. The workers, albeit highly paid, can afford it, and when it's built they can visit the White House and shoot hoops with President Obama. Retired players like Magic Johnson, Larry Bird and Michael Jordan could be asked to contribute as well. The White House needs a new basketball court and it's not in the stimulus package.

It doesn't need to be. The greatest players in the land can be asked to step up and make sure that President Obama, who has so much of import on his plate, has a good place to play hoops—a place for sweating, herky jerky moves left to the hoop—and perhaps basketball diplomacy too.

In return, the president and his economic team might be persuaded to add funds to the stimulus package for more inner city sports facilities—basketball courts, soccer and baseball fields, swimming gyms, etc.—and to make amateur and youth sports an integral part of his urban revitalization and health strategies. The president should appoint a top athlete to head the President's Council on Physical Fitness (I nominate former soccer star Mia Hamm and her baseball player husband Nomar Garciaparra to share the post). Participating in sports, not simply watching, should be a message that the Obama administration trumpets at home and abroad. Of course, President Obama will lead by example.

After the Stimulus: It's Time for a New Foundation

February 12, 2009—Huffington Post

The Obama administration needs a stronger narrative. If the president is to succeed in the recovery from economic recession, repair the multi-faceted damage of the Bush years, and create sustainable economic growth for the future, he has to have a compelling story line. Most Americans don't easily understand economics—but they do experience economic reality. They need an explanatory framework, if they are going to support far reaching reform efforts led by the president and the government.

Obama's Inaugural address was a let down to many who had expected not just soaring rhetoric but clarity as to the tasks ahead. Critics of the speech point out that no memorable lines were spoken—nothing on the political scale of FDR's famous, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself" (see Adam Cohen's new book *Nothing To Fear* for the origins of the phrase, as well as a brilliant depiction of FDR's key advisors). The speech was vague as to why the nation is at a crossroads; we were not told who or what is to blame, nor exactly what must be done. Instead, there was a call for a new era of responsibility. It was inspirational to see an African-American sworn in as president, but the nation expects more from Obama than simply being the first black President (as he no doubt does of himself). His supporters and admirers want him to be a great president—a transformational rather than a transitional leader.

Obama's performance at his first press conference was a marked improvement. It was, as one ABC reporter put it, "a teaching moment." In a calm and confident voice, the president conducted a public seminar on the economy, explaining in laymen's terms the

Keynesian rationale for his stimulus package—the \$790 billion Economic Recovery Act that he will soon sign. He offered clear metrics by which to judge his performance on the short-term economic front: job creation, revival of the credit markets, and stabilization of the housing market.

Unfortunately, Secretary of the Treasury Tim Geithner did less well in his first public outing with the press. He was not clear and often sounded tentative and unsure of himself. Unlike the stimulus bill, the administration's credit revival plan appears less than adequate. It... "seems to be yet another child of the failed interventions of the past one and half years: optimistic and indecisive," comments Martin Wolf, the well regarded economics columnist for *The Financial Times*. Wolf argues that it is a plan that hopes for the best, but does not deal boldly enough with the deteriorating financial sector.

My wife Sue Toigo (who works in the investment business and knows many of the bankers who are apologizing before Congress) thinks that Obama needed a strong woman to clear up the nation's financial mess, and that he should have asked former New York Banking Superintendent Muriel Siebert, the first woman to have a seat on the NY Stock Exchange, Sheila Bair, the no-nonsense head of the FDIC, or Laura Tyson, former chair of the Council of Economic Advisors and a business school dean, to be his Secretary of the Treasury.

Even if he had picked one of these capable women to be his Iron Lady, she too would need a narrative from which to work.

There was one line that went little noticed in Obama's Inaugural that might provide language for framing his economic story when he addresses a joint session of Congress on February 24. In his January speech, the new president pledged to reform the Federal government's approach to education, health care, science and infrastructure in an effort to "lay a new foundation for growth"—and he repeated the words "new foundation" in passing at his first press conference.

The phrase "a new New Deal" (mea culpa: I popularized it in the fall) has been overworked by the media to describe the Obama administration—and the White House has not suggested other words. It's time to replace the New Deal rhetoric—even the First 100 Days imagery—with Obama's own words: A New Foundation.

In his upcoming speech to Congress, President Obama could begin by saying that the state of the union is not good. "The economic situation is dire. While we have moved boldly with the economic recovery bill and banking reforms to stabilize the economy, these measures will take time. There is no magic bullet. Above all, we cannot return to the old ways of speculation and private excess...."

"To restore genuine economic prosperity for all Americans, we need to build a New Foundation for economic growth. We cannot go back again to the days of easy credit, greed on Wall Street, and borrowing abroad to purchase foreign made consumer goods. We need to build a New Foundation for a 21st Century economy—one that is environmentally sustainable, fair to working families, and builds on our American strengths as a hard working, innovative people. We need to become an America that builds and creates, not just borrows and

consumes. To accomplish this will require all of us working together to build this New Foundation upon which we can construct genuine prosperity."

The president's speechwriters can elaborate on the rhetoric. The point is that Obama needs this kind of story line to sustain his political efforts in the months and years to come. As Nobel Prize winning economists Paul Krugman, Joe Stiglitz and other progressives have argued, the economic change of course that is needed is serious, deep seated and difficult. It will continue to be opposed by conservatives who dislike an expanded role for government, and by many who are stuck in old ways of thinking about the economy. Above all, it will be a challenge to the idea that any kind of economic growth is good, and that simply reviving the GNP is enough to measure success for a president and his administration.

"We've been consuming rather than investing. We're suffering from investment-deficit disorder," notes *New York Times* economic columnist David Leonhardt (in his survey article in the Sunday *New York Times* magazine, February 1).

If we are not to return to the old model of consumption-led economic growth, then what might take its place? What will be the engines of growth for the future—and what will be measures of successful outcomes?

President Obama has offered some hints of his thinking with talk of "green jobs"—job creation by retrofitting public buildings, revamping the auto industry for greater energy efficient vehicles, and moving the economy over time to non-fossil fuels. A down payment on retrofitting is included in the stimulus bill, but it's just a beginning. The existing stock of 110 million homes could be made more energy efficient. The US Postal

Service could go almost completely green. Postal Rate Commissioner Ruth Goldway has called for the conversion of over 200,000 US mail vehicles to electricity, and for Post Office buildings to become solar powered, complete with electric docking stations. A green postal service would be a highly visible, daily reminder of Obama's commitment to a new economic strategy (even the uniforms could be changed to green).

Public investment can provide some of the funds for these efforts, but as U Mass economist Robert Pollin points out, the mobilization of private capital will also be necessary. Banks could be required to devote a percentage of loan portfolios to green investments. Expanded tax credits could be provided to homes and businesses for installation of solar and other renewable energy. Funds from a cap-and-trade emissions program or a carbon tax can be recycled back to the public in rebates to spend on energy saving measures.

Retrofitting and other green efforts will create jobs in the US. Pollin writes (in the *Nation's* special February 16 issue on Green Recovery): "The central facts here are irrefutable: spending the same amount of money on building a clean energy economy will create three times more jobs within the United States than would spending on our existing fossil fuel infrastructure. The transformation to a clean energy economy can therefore serve as a major long-term engine of job creation."

The Obama administration can also spur technological innovation in the private sector through creation of a Green NASA at the Department of Energy to fund research into more energy efficient batteries, solar cells, lighting, heating and cooling systems, and even fertilizers. Other government departments could fund research into

affordable low-tech energy devices suitable for export to developing countries, and make purchase of these products part of a new foreign assistance strategy.

A serious program to develop high speed rail corridors in the US would not only create jobs; it could lead to more balanced economic growth. Just as commerce and housing has developed along major highways like Route 128 in Boston or I-50 in the South, many mid-size cities would expand or undergo renewal along high speed rail corridors in California, the Upper Mid-West, and parts of the Northeast and South.

Innovation in health care and educational technology can also spur healthy economic growth. Harvard Business School Professor Clay Christensen is certain of it. In his recent books, *Disrupting Class*, and *The Innovator's Prescription*, he and his colleagues explain how more sophisticated and strategic use of electronic technology combined with networking can "disrupt" stagnant centralized systems and decentralize education and healthcare to improve outcomes for individuals (and society), and create new waves of economic growth. Christensen deserves to be nominated for the Nobel Prize in economics for his work, and he should be consulted by the Obama administration (fyi: he is a distant cousin).

Reducing health care costs, combined with universal coverage, eliminates one of the anchors weighing down American companies. Healthier citizens are more productive and happier, and healthy children come to school better able to learn. Better educated, healthier children commit less crime, reducing societal costs of policing and incarceration. Diagnostic products developed by "disruptive technology" become sources of jobs, and new products to be exported as well.

American education, especially higher education, is a leading export by attracting foreign students to the US. New learning technologies can become export products for innovative US firms to sell in Latin America and Africa where educational systems are weak and in need of modernization and expansion. The correlation between investment in education, technology and economic growth is well established (and documented in Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz' new book, *The Race Between Education and Technology*). The synergy between public and private universities and the private sector in the Bay Area led to the development of Silicon Valley industries. The school of winemaking at UC Davis has played a role in the successful development of California's wine industry. Many of the leading vintners in Napa and Sonoma studied at Davis, and it is a continuing source of human capital and scientific research. These are just a few examples of how public investment in education creates the foundation for an innovative private sector—truly effective public-private networks.

State colleges and community colleges provide retraining for out-of-work Americans, as well as life long learning opportunities for older Americans, and boot strap programs for making the transition from high school to higher education. Public and private educational institutions are also centers of culture for communities, providing homes for orchestras, dance companies, public radio stations, and theater groups. In the current economic crisis, many state governments are cutting back on just these kinds of educational investments, when they should be increasing them. That's why the economic recovery package with its financial aid to states and localities is vital as a stopgap measure—but it is only a necessary first step.

Public investment in non commercial sports facilities can also be a part of a New Foundation strategy. During the New Deal, the WPA and related agencies built 12,700 playgrounds, 8,500 gymnasiums, 750 swimming pools, 1,000 ice skating rinks, 64 ski jumps, and numerous public golf courses. In the 1930s, membership in private golf courses and country clubs dropped, but municipal golf courses and public tennis courts were crowded. Soft ball leagues boomed, as did use of public beaches and swimming pools. Leisure time was democratized.

The nation needs a similar growth in sports facilities, especially in urban areas. Sports activities reduce health costs, improve quality of life and reduce crime. A campaign led by the hoopster president could make us a nation of players, not just spectators (amateur athletes purchase lots of gear too). Of course, professional sports will go on, fans will cheer for their favorite teams—but corporate sponsorships and over the top Super bowl parties might diminish.

A renaissance of healthy, safe food can be promoted by the new First Family. Already a new assistant chef has been hired who likes to cook healthy, locally grown foods. The expansion of urban farmers markets (a political movement begun in Santa Monica in the 1980s) allows small local farmers to make a living and creates jobs in the restaurant and food industries. Michelle Obama might want to pay a visit to one of the farmers markets in the DC area (there is one every week on the grounds of the National Institutes of Health). Successful small businesses have grown from start-up stalls at local food and crafts markets. Another part of a New Foundation strategy should be a make-over of the Small Business Administration into a center for the support of entrepreneurship and innovation. The country needs more of what INC columnist

Bo Burlingham calls “small giants”—companies that produce good products while treating their workers fairly, respecting their customers, and protecting the environment (see his book, *Small Giants—Companies that Chose to Be Great Instead of Big* for examples). A New Foundation banking system would provide loans and business advice to these kinds of dynamic small businesses rather than make speculative, nonproductive investments.

A New Foundation strategy for spurring both public and private investment can lead to more jobs, and to changing the contours and content of economic growth.

We need to measure the outcomes of the economy in more human terms. An international commission headed by Nobel economists Joe Stiglitz of Columbia and Amartya Sen of Harvard is reviewing alternative economic indicators, and looking at how to devise better ways to assess quality of life—new measures of economic, social and environmental status. The report is due this April. President Obama could embrace the report by inviting Stiglitz and Sen to the White House to discuss their findings. An added benefit is that the commission was championed by French President Nicholas Sarkozy, so the meeting could also make for good public diplomacy.

President Obama’s speech to Congress this month is a chance to refine and reboot his message of change by explaining to Americans his vision of what the change will be. He can offer concrete examples of how he will ignite these engines of growth, and explain the human metrics by which he wants his efforts judged. He can ask the nation to join him in building a New Foundation of prosperity—one that will make a more decent, fairer and more productive society.

The New Deal is history. The challenge of constructing a New Foundation is Obama’s clear and present opportunity.

Advice to the President: Abolish the Commerce Department

March 19, 2009

President Obama has had a difficult time finding a new Secretary of Commerce. He shouldn't worry about it any longer. There is a simple solution—just abolish the post.

The Commerce Department, as presently constituted, is a hodge podge of agencies with no central purpose. It's not a job with great policy influence. The Big Dogs on economic policy are in the White House and at the Treasury. It has become tradition or habit for the President to give the post of Commerce Secretary to one of his chief fundraisers and close friends, or to a politician in need of a payback, or sometimes to a token appointee from the opposition party. President Obama has already unsuccessfully looked at all three options with fundraiser and Chicago friend Penny Pritzker, New Mexico Governor and primary supporter Bill Richardson, and most recently with Republican Senator Judd Gregg. These kinds of appointees are not expected to do much except meet and greet visitors in the huge Secretary's office, almost the size of a sports field. They also encourage the kind of cynicism about government that President Obama wants to combat.

When the Commerce structure was built in 1932, it was the largest office building in the world. It is immense, and visitors often get lost in its long hallways and byways. The National Aquarium, somewhat strangely, is located in the basement. The building was auspiciously named after Herbert Hoover during the Reagan administration (he served as Commerce Secretary as well as President).

Working there, as I did for a time as Deputy Under Secretary, is an odd experience, and does not bring back happy memories. Friends

who visited me remember having trouble finding my huge office, then being amazed that the heating and cooling system seemed so out of wack that I was always opening and shutting my windows.

This is not to say that the Commerce Department and its over 30,000 employees does not do useful things. Under its domain, are such valuable public agencies as the National Weather Service, the National Hurricane Center, the Bureau of the Census, and the Patent Office. Abolishing the current Department of Commerce does not mean eliminating these vital government services.

President Obama can shift the political playing field on the Commerce Secretary issue by announcing in his February 24 address to Congress that he is going to rethink the Department's mission and organization. He is going to break it up, and reorganize it in a more effective way as part of his strategy for reviving and rejuvenating the American economy and building a new foundation for economic growth.

Here's how it might be done.

One of the hot issues troubling Senator Gregg and many Republicans has to do with possible political influence over the census. To alleviate that concern and to improve national statistical analysis, the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (which compiles national economic statistics) could be spun off as an independent agency called Statistics USA, led by a highly regarded social scientist just as NIH is headed by a leading scientist. Obama might even credit the example from our neighbor to the North, Canada, where the federal agency Statistics

Canada (affectionately known as “StatCan”) is the most highly regarded statistical agency in the world. StatCan offers a world class benchmark for independence, professionalism and transparency. A new independent Statistics USA might also fold in other government statistical units such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Like its space cousin NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) could easily become an independent agency run solely by professionals. NOAA includes the National Weather Service, the National Marine Fisheries (with its very cool website “FishWatch” that provides useful facts on seafood), the National Hurricane Center, and the All Hazards Monitor Service. NOAA is one of those government agencies whose services form a foundation for economic and social activity.

Another Commerce office easy to spin off is the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Established in 1901, this office manages highly regarded and necessary labs that provide testing and standardization for American industry, especially in manufacturing and engineering.

The remaining agencies in Commerce deal with the economy, but have had little national policy impact. When I worked there, I invited Laura Tyson, head of the Council of Economic Advisors, over to the Hoover Building to speak to my staff. They told me that it was the first time such a top economics official had ever visited the building. These economic agencies need to be streamlined, given a clearer mission, and placed in a new Cabinet level department called the US Department of Industry and Trade. Being appointed the Secretary of Industry and Trade would be a job worth having, and one for which the President would appoint a serious person. The new Secretary would be a player

on the first string of the President’s economic team.

The newly constituted Department of Industry and Trade would include the existing National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the International Trade Administration, the Bureau of Industry, the Patent Office, and a rethought Economic Development Administration. It would have both domestic and international economic focus—a necessity in this globalized economy. To promote trade, the Secretary would overhaul and upgrade the US Commercial Service which currently has offices in 100 cities and overseas posts in 80 countries (usually housed in US embassies). In addition to promoting American exports, the commercial service would be charged with greater sharing of innovative ideas on business, technology and economic development, and would work cooperatively with US and foreign business schools to teach entrepreneurship and business skills to citizens in poorer communities at home and abroad. The trade negotiating authority of USTR (currently a stand alone office answering to the President) should be moved into the new department, adding influence to the Secretary and insulating trade negotiations from Presidential politics such as rewarding countries with Free Trade Agreements for supporting US foreign policy (a common practice under the Bush administration).

The new Secretary of Industry and Trade would also become an influential player on industrial policy. A revived and modernized set of industry offices would provide the government with top flight analysis of major industries and emerging ones. The Secretary would have the staff expertise necessary to oversee a revamping of the auto industry, to cite a current pressing need, and to advise the President effectively on the state of other

American industries—to benchmark them in best practices against foreign competitors—and to assist industries with research grants, loans, and consultative studies—not to pick “the winners” in specific fields, but to assure that America’s industrial base remains strong and vital for the 21st Century.

The new US Department of Industry and Trade would quickly become a career destination for the best MBA and economics graduates, and the US Commercial Service would become as competitive (and as exciting) to join as the US Foreign Service. It would no longer be viewed as a backwater in the Federal government.

Following this course of action or a variant would provide yet another example of President Obama’s boldness in making change, and demonstrate his determination to advocate a smart, forward looking economic strategy for the nation. And, in the spirit of bi-partisanship, he could name the National Aquarium in the basement after departed President George W. Bush.

Money, Banking and Torture: It's Just Shocking!

May 23, 2009—Huffington Post

Official Washington seems shocked that torture has been the rule above the law during the Bush administration. Reaction to the release of the Justice Department memos on the subject seems almost naive—and certainly with no sense of history (in this case, very recent history).

I remember former defense secretary Robert McNamara saying in a documentary about the Vietnam War that he wished he had known more about the country before conducting a war there. Didn't anyone in the Pentagon or White House bother to tell him about French expert Bernard Fall and his books on the Indochinese war such as *Hell In A Very Small Place?* At Yale in the mid-60s, I met Fall when he came to lecture, read his books and followed his articles in the *New Republic*. I also took courses on the history and economy of Southeast Asia. Knowledge of the place was neither Top Secret nor hidden.

Similarly with the story of the Bush administration, the CIA and torture, information has not been secret nor unreported. Wisconsin history professor Alfred McCoy's book, *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, explains the origins of many of the techniques described in the Justice Department memos. The film *Taxi to the Dark Side* reports on the torture methods used by US officials in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo; it won the Academy Award for best documentary in 2007. *New Yorker* writer and former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jane Mayer's book *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals* is a model of investigative reporting on the legal machinations behind

the Bush administration's approach to fighting terrorism. *The New Yorker* is not a difficult publication to locate.

Fortunately, a few members of Congress such as Senators Carl Levin, Diane Feinstein, and Patrick Leahy know this current history and understand that the nation cannot and should not sweep it under the rug. Only a thorough airing of the issue will allow the US to rebuild its reputation among civilized nations and to undertake the institutional reforms needed to prevent this unAmerican behavior from being repeated in the future.

The best way to do this, as President Obama has recognized and endorsed, is a bipartisan Congressional commission or Select committee which will hold comprehensive hearings, subpoena witnesses, examine documents, and report to the American people on how and why torture became a seemingly acceptable part of US international behavior. The country has done this before with the Church Committee investigations of CIA excesses during the Cold War. The Republic did not fall, nor did American national security suffer. We still prevailed in the Cold War—and we can certainly triumph against rag tag jihadists without resorting to torture (see Reza Aslan's new book, *How To Win A Cosmic War: God, Globalization and the End of the War on Terror*, for a nuanced rethinking of US anti-terrorism strategy).

As with the torture issue, so with money and banking; we need more sunlight, not less.

Already there seems to be moves afoot by Washington pundits, some politicians, and lots of Wall Streeters to put the financial crisis behind us, to move on to economic recovery

(when it comes), and not bother ourselves with why the financial crisis happened or how to assure that the US economy and global markets are not put in dire jeopardy again.

As with the CIA and torture, we need to rely on Congress and key Senators to lead the way.

The Obama administration has its hands full simply dealing with the economic recovery, from restructuring the auto industry to keeping the big banks afloat, to passing a Federal Budget; they cannot be expected to explore root causes or even propose long term structural reform.

One of the few national politicians who saw the economic storm coming is Senator Byron Dorgan, the populist Democrat from North Dakota. Ten years ago, in the debate over the Financial Services Modernization Act which repealed Glass-Steagall and lifted FDR era regulations on banks, Senator Dorgan prophetically warned: "This bill will ...raise the likelihood of future massive taxpayer bailouts...I also think we will in ten years time, look back and say: We should not have done that because we forgot the lessons of the past; those lessons represent timeless truths that were as true in the year 2000 or 2010 as they were in year 1930 or 1935." Dorgan warned against financial institutions investing in derivatives, and about banks that would become "too big to fail" and require bailouts with taxpayer money.

Dorgan has written a book, *Reckless! How Debt, Deregulation and Dark Money Nearly Bankrupted America* to be published next month. He has also proposed legislation to establish a Senate Select Committee to hold hearings on the financial crisis—on its root causes, and on the structural reforms needed to prevent future meltdowns. Senator John

McCain is a leading co-sponsor of the initiative.

Such a Select Committee would hold extensive hearings, hear from a variety of experts, and examine the workings of the Federal Reserve, the private banking system, and hybrid organizations such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, consider them as a whole, and ask how they can work better to provide the credit needed by a modern, globalized economy without unleashing and rewarding unbridled greed, fraud and speculative abuse.

Money—how it is created and how it functions in the economy often seems mysterious and opaque to most Americans. Few understand how central banks regulate the money supply or how private banks create money and provide credit. Money is a social construct, no longer backed by gold or other precious metals. Readers looking for a primer should start with the late economist John Kenneth Galbraith's clear-eyed volume, *Money: Whence It Came, Where It Went*, and then move on to the political history recounted in *Lords of Finance—The Bankers Who Broke the World*, by Liaquat Ahamed, a splendid biographical rendering of the Central Bankers of the 1920s and 1930s who led us to the Great Depression. If you have energy left, pick up William Greider's award winning reportage in his book, *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs The Country*.

Most of our fellow citizens won't have time for such self-education. That's why the country needs a public discussion of money and banking—an economics tutorial for the nation. Congressional leaders and the White House should endorse and pass Senator Dorgan's initiative.

It's time to stop being shocked by events.
Let's learn from them. Let the hearings begin
—on money and on torture.

Give Hope A Chance: The Renewal of Summer

June 23, 2009—Huffington Post

My wife loves President Obama—at least, that’s how she puts it, and she won’t have a bad word said about him in the house. I like the guy, but I have a hard time falling in love with any politician. I’m a metrics man. Show me results—facts on the ground—not rhetoric. I also try to be patient about the political process.

Many of my liberal friends are already disappointed with the Obama administration. They think that he has been too cautious in his reform proposals for health care, the environment, and education, and too willing to “put the past behind us” on the Bush era and its record of torture and executive secrecy. I can see their points, but I say to them: give the guy a chance. He’s only had the job about six months, and repairing the damage that Bush has done takes time. Obama is still popular at home and abroad. He has political capital to spend—and he is not yet being pushed in a more progressive direction by any grassroots movements. Summer has begun. The country is politically quiet and even with ten percent unemployment people are thinking more about their private lives than public action.

I know that I am. My younger, only sister died recently, and I attended her memorial service in Washington, DC. The gathering felt like too many self-important people in one auditorium filled to capacity with former and current officials as well as friends and relatives. Most meant well and were there to honor my sister’s life, but they wore suits and were very somber. It was the end of something, the departure of my sister for whom I had been big brother and mentor, and I felt incredibly sad. After the service, my wife and I and my daughter and son-in-law took our twenty-

month-old grandson to the National Zoo. The place cheered me a little. It was a Saturday afternoon and the zoo was crowded with families on a summer’s day outing. We showed my grandson Viggo the elephants, and he stood wide eyed as one very large elephant plodded back and forth carrying and breaking a large tree branch. “Elephant break stick,” he informed us approvingly. Then, the elephant began to take large, noisy dumps, and Viggo said loudly, “Elephant’s really big poops.” That became his major topic of conversation for the rest of the visit, and for the plane ride home. Very basic and apolitical.

I’ve put aside my bedside pile of economics and foreign policy books and turned to futuristic fiction for summer reading. It’s a kind of escape, but not entirely. I’ve just finished and recommend the novel *Ultimatum* by Matthew Glass, a political thriller set in 2032. The premise is that the Obama administration fails to bring about reform, and subsequent Republican and Democratic Presidents either make matters worse or let problems linger. When the 48th President, reform candidate Joe Benton is elected, health care reform, education, and infrastructure renewal are still pressing domestic issues, and the US is bogged down in a counter insurgency war in Columbia, and Iraq and Syria are fighting over water rights in the Middle East. As the book opens, Benton has taken office. His major issue is Relocation—moving Americans from coastal and arid states adversely affected by climate change to other parts of the country. The numbers of internal refugees is reaching the hundreds of thousands. Benton has run on the theme of A New Foundation—ironic given that Obama has used the same phrase to describe his

administration's philosophy and policies—and he wants to take on global warming in a serious way before the country and the world are overwhelmed by the relocation issue (a secret Pentagon report predicts refugees will soon number in the millions). Past efforts including second and third Kyoto agreements—lots of talk little action—have done little to reverse or slow climate change. Not surprisingly, China is the other preeminent power and the new American President must find a way to bring the Chinese to the bargaining table to take radical measures to reduce carbon emissions.

Ultimatum is ideal summer reading—a good, seemingly realistic political thriller and a cautionary tale of consequences that might await us and our grandchildren if we fail at reform now.

I've also begun reading novels by British "science fiction" writer Ian McDonald about other rising powers—India and Brazil. In *River of Gods* and the sequel, *Cyberabad Days*, the writer depicts the India of 2047 as a superpower of one-and-a-half billion in an age of climate change and technological advance—water wars, genetically improved children—and a country that has fractured into a dozen separatist states. Similarly, McDonald's novel *Brasyl* is a portrait of near-future Brazil and the lives of a Rio TV producer, a self-made businessman up from the slums of Sao Paulo, and a Jesuit missionary on a mission in the 18th century. It won the British Science Fiction award. The books are well written, semi-plausible and offer a non-American-centric view of the near future—something that is hard to get from reading or listening to US media cover how the President killed a fly on the air, what Newt Gingrich has to say, or the continuing adventures of Sarah Palin and her family.

From past summers, I can also recommend Maureen McHugh's gentle novel, *China Mountain Zhang*, that offers a glimpse of a future where China dominates the world politically and culturally, and the less plausible but entertaining *Assassin* series by Robert Ferrigno set in 2040 where the blue states have converted to Islam and the red states break away to form a conservative Christian republic in the South. The first two books, *Prayers for the Assassin* and *Sin of the Assassin*, tell the story of the struggle of three political parties for power in the American Islamic Republic (the third volume, *Heart of the Assassin*, will be published in August).

We also have plans to see a few plays—even a politically themed one, *Farragut North*, mainly because Christopher Pine, the actor who plays young Captain James T. Kirk in the new *Star Trek* film is starring in the production—and to take refuge and comfort in the music of our favorite singers Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt, compatriots of sorts in a generational journey. Sitting under the stars at the Greek Theater in the Hollywood Hills and listening to them sing can't help but renew one's spirits.

As in summers past, there will be backyard cookouts with family and friends, shopping at local farmers markets for food to prepare, and lots of time with grandson Viggo and granddaughter Jasmine. My wife Sue has built a magical tea garden for Jasmine in the front yard where she and her young friends can serve our four dogs pretend tea and real cookies. My step-daughter Molly gave me a choice of Dodger games for Father's Day, and the two of us will pick a day game when Manny Ramirez is back in the line-up. I plan to play as much tennis and basketball as possible, and eat lunches at our friend Fred Deni's bistro, *Back on the Beach*, where we sit at tables in the sand and look at the Pacific.

Children, outdoor cooking and eating, sports, music, escapist fiction—it will be a good California summer, a time of renewal and healing. I plan to give hope a chance in all things, even politics, and I hope to be pleasantly surprised come fall with the president whom my wife loves. I wish Sasha, Malia, Michelle and First Dog Bo a fine summer themselves. Barack too.

Obama's America: What is Economic Growth For?

November 18, 2009—Huffington Post

Fed chairman Ben Bernanke, along with other Obama economic team officials, tells us that economic growth is returning, and that it is "very likely" the recession has ended. With ten percent unemployment in many parts of the country, this might seem like less than great news. Certainly, in conventional political terms it is progress—but that's the problem. It's a conventional view—not the Change We Need.

The economic crisis from which we are slowly emerging is, at its base, a moral and an intellectual failure. As Robert Skidelsky, the award winning biographer of the great economist John Maynard Keynes, writes: "At the heart of the moral failure is the worship of economic growth for its own sake, rather than as a way to achieve the 'good life'. As a result, economic efficiency—the means to economic growth—has been given absolute priority in our thinking and policy." (Check out Skidelsky's new book, *Keynes-The Return of the Master*, which explains Keynes' relevance for today's economic crisis, as well as the failure of almost the entire economics profession.)

Keynes understood in the 1930s that capitalism needed to be stabilized through government action—primarily government spending—and most importantly, reformed to reduce systemic weaknesses that caused the Depression (and the current global economic crisis). The New Deal in the US and social democratic governments in Europe, both before and after World War II, took measures to stabilize their economies and to reform them. Efforts were also made to do this at the international level through the Bretton Woods agreements of which Keynes was a prime thinker and mover.

These policies of stabilization followed by significant structural reform and ongoing programs of government spending (in the US, the GI Bill, national education and transportation acts, etc.—and similar programs in Europe, Australia and Japan, including the creation of national health systems), laid the foundations for the economic growth of the post-war period in the 50s and 60s when real improvements in living standards, reduction in poverty and inequality, and the wide spread provision of health and welfare benefits created a thriving middle class in most non-communist nations.

In speeches earlier this year, most notably at Georgetown University, President Obama said that he wants to lay the foundation for new economic growth—growth that improves citizens' lives and does less damage to the environment. Unfortunately, while his words are bold, he acts cautiously when it comes to actual reforms that are necessary to create this new foundation for economic growth, and he runs the risk of returning to the same old "money values" that underpin Reaganomics, which brought us the recent economic crisis.

His proposals, and his economic team, seem at variance with his rhetoric. Whether this is a function of his true beliefs about what his goals really are, or simply his political calculus of what is possible, is difficult to know. On the evidence, we do know that his choice of economic advisers and appointees has not been reformist. Instead of Joe Stiglitz, James Galbraith, Paul Krugman or Barry Bluestone, he has selected Larry Summers, Tim Geithner and Christina Roemer. Even Laura Tyson and Robert Reich, both of whom endorsed and

campaigns for Obama, would have been more progressive and reform-minded.

In Washington, personnel is, in large part, policy—and who you see in power is what you get. Obama picked stabilizers not reformers. His recent speech to Wall Street spoke more about responsibility than about reform, as if it were personal failings rather than an unbalanced system that caused the crisis. Obama's proposed reforms are moderate and in the analysis of many experts like Simon Johnson of MIT, insufficient to prevent a future meltdown. Wall Street seems to have returned to its old ways of doing business, only with even larger financial conglomerates like the new Bank of America which swallowed Countrywide and Merrill Lynch and is surely "too big to fail." The message seems to be that the Obama government will bail out the big companies to get back to stability and growth, but not significantly change the way the system operates to prevent future bailouts.

As with economic policy, so it is with health care. Obama's approach has been to move to the center even before the debate began. He could have said at the outset that a single payer system was, in fact, the most ideal, and then moved away from it towards the center as politics dictated. Sadly, thinking that he was avoiding all of the mistakes of the Clinton administration, he recreated Bill Clinton's approach of making too rational a case for health care reform, instead of a moral one. There has been too much talk of "bending the cost curve" and not enough talk about how a decent country should treat all of its citizens.

As TR Reid writes, "The question facing Americans this fall is: what should be the ethical basis of America's health-care system?" (Reid's new book, *The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper*

and Fairer Health Care, surveys the leading universal health care systems in such countries as Canada, Great Britain, Japan, France and New Zealand and finds lessons for the US.)

In 1992, I advised President Clinton not to put Hillary Clinton in charge of health care inside the White House. I wanted her to lead the reform effort outside—to follow the model of Eleanor Roosevelt—to travel around the country visiting hospitals, community clinics, health coops, model health centers, to gather stories and build grass roots support for reform by creating a compelling narrative based on peoples lives. At the same time, I counseled that a key Senator like Jay Rockefeller who represents a white-working class state, West Virginia, should hold hearings on the experience of other countries in covering all of their citizens—telling the story that Reid reports in his new book. The facts about alternative health care systems would then have been presented to the public without much distortion. Clinton chose not to follow this advice, and Obama has not followed this path either. Obama's team learned the wrong lessons from Clinton's experience with health care. It was not the content of Clinton's plan that doomed it to failure, but the political strategy that he adopted. I hope that will not be the case with Obama and his efforts.

Obama chose not to give Michelle a role, perhaps fearing a comparison with Hillary. She is not out collecting human stories of the failure of the health care system, and instead, is confining herself to the White House food garden and opening a farmers market near the White House. Worthy projects, but not the optimal use of her time nor her abilities. Hearings were not promoted by the White House on health care systems in other advanced democracies and Obama has not spoken about these other models in his

speeches. This silence let opponents of reform offer false and politically damaging characterizations of how health care is delivered in Great Britain, Canada and France. Wild charges that Teddy Kennedy would not have been treated by the National Health Service in England or that physicist Stephen Hawking would have been left to die have gone unanswered. Instead, the human narrative comes from the Right about Obama's death panels and letting Granny die.

All these miscues are enough to make a good Democrat doubt the political bona fides of Rahm Emmanuel, David Axelrod and Valerie Jarrett. What were they thinking?

Political mistakes in the Obama White House have been compounded by the misuse of an asset that Bill Clinton did not have—10 million or more names of activists on computer. Obama's campaign army for change could have been used as a real potent force for political change; instead, it is just an email list which the White House uses in support of whatever stands Obama is taking.

Had Obama turned the names over to a nonprofit group—one independent of the White House—perhaps run by someone like Marshall Ganz, the legendary organizer who helped train Obama's campaign staff, he could have created a political force outside of conventional Washington which would have organized grassroots support for strong reforms like single payer and put pressure on both the Congress and the White House for a truly ethical health care system. It was a missed opportunity, but it can be remedied, although not in time for the passage of a good health care bill this fall.

I'm afraid that letting Max Baucus take the lead on health care reform in the Senate and

pushing aside tougher reformers like Jay Rockefeller is another political error with consequences for the shape of any health legislation this fall. I don't expect much. If my leader and hometown Congressman Henry Waxman (one of my few personal heroes) votes for a final bill, then I will support it. Some kind of reforming the health care system, if Henry supports it, will be better than nothing—but things could have been so much better. It's déjà vu all over again.

I am reluctantly coming to the conclusion that President Obama's governing style is not going to produce the kind of reforms which his millions of supporters had hoped for. We know that he is a powerful speech maker, but he has the unfortunate habit (as Frank Rich pointed out in his Sunday *New York Times* commentary) of thinking it is a more powerful tool than it is—and he has a tendency to think so much of his own powers of persuasion that he is in serious danger of overexposure or creating a kind of cult of personality. After all, this weekend he is appearing on all five national talks shows on Sunday, followed by an appearance on Letterman on Monday night—all to argue for health care reform. Is there no one else of stature in this administration who can make the case for reform? Where is Obama's Frances Perkins or his Senator Wagner—just two of the great Americans who brought us the New Deal as part of FDR's team?

The power of rhetoric, even that of great presidential orators, is overrated in politics, and is, I believe, less effective the more that it is used. In any case, it doesn't substitute for a more aggressive and smarter political strategy and bolder policy initiatives that wake up supporters in the progressive camp—and it doesn't work if there is only one voice speaking for change. Obama is clearly the One, but he needs others too.

I don't want to be too pessimistic. Situations change, and personnel can be replaced. There are mid-course corrections in any presidential administration, and there will certainly be ones in the Obama administration.

As to the answer of what is economic growth for—the question posed in my title—for now, we have to look across the waters to France where President Sarkozy has just released the report of his commission on how to measure economic growth. Co-chaired by Nobel prize winner Joe Stiglitz, the report suggests new ways to measure a society's well being other than simply the growth of GNP. Sarkozy has indicated that the French statistics agency will be incorporating new indicators in its accounting of national income statistics. Perhaps, he will give President Obama and the other leaders at the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh copies of the report.(the commission report is available online at: www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr) And perhaps, President Obama will give some serious thought to trading in Larry Summers for Joe Stiglitz, letting Jay Rockefeller take over for Max Baucus, or calling populist Democrats like Byron Dorgan and Sherrod Brown off the back benches and onto center court.

Obama's First Year: A Nobel Effort

December 10, 2009—Huffington Post

A popular Washington, DC joke: What has Barack Obama accomplished his first year in office?

Answer: He won the Nobel Peace Prize.

It's not really very funny or fair to Obama, or to the Nobel committee who picked him as this year's winner. I think that the Norwegians chose to give the award to the American people as much as to the new American President. They were thanking Americans for having the good sense and courage to elect an untested young politician of mixed racial heritage to lead the world's superpower. It was, of course, also a rejection of George Bush and his ill fated attempt to turn the War on Terror in to a new Cold War.

How has Obama repaid the faith of the American voters who elected him—and is he set on a path that might produce deeds to match the aspirations of the Nobel committee?

These are the kinds of questions that I posed to my seminar on American Grand Strategy at Occidental College where Barack Obama studied his first two years. My students began by examining the Obama foreign policy team—profiling in class his appointees to the National Security Council, the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA and even the Treasury and Commerce. They also looked at the terrain on which foreign policy decision making takes place, including the role of Congress and the influence of the media.

My Oxy students concluded that Obama had selected a competent and professional team, most of whom had served in the Clinton

administration. The students also found, somewhat to their surprise, that the team is also very centrist—and in most cases, led by cautious and conventional actors. There seem to be few if any “out of the box” or Big Picture thinkers on the team. It is a highly centralized operation with decisions located almost exclusively in the White House. The students understand that Barack Obama is The Decider—the ultimate arbiter of US foreign policy as well as Commander In Chief. The students looked at Obama's “cool” decision making style. He is known as No Drama Obama. He values team work, and lengthy, almost academic-like deliberations. Sometimes the decision making process can take weeks or months. It was on display during his deliberative approach to deciding on troop strength and a strategy for the war in Afghanistan. Some critics called it “dithering,” and others viewed it as Obama in his “Mr Spock mode.” Whatever; it is a hall mark of his approach to exercising presidential power.

As for a new American grand strategy, the students did not find one that explains or describes Obama's approach to the world. They recognized a theme—engagement—or in some cases such as Russia, re-engagement or “restart.” A central message of the Obama campaign was that he would engage with the world, not try to dominate it with military might—and talk with leaders of all nations, even those who might be hostile to US interests. Obama was attacked by Hillary Clinton and by John McCain for his supposedly naive approach to international relations—and he is criticized today for supposedly apologizing too much for America's past misdeeds.

There is no doubt that President Obama and his team have reengaged with the world—and the world seems to appreciate it, if one can judge by recent global opinion polls. He has sent special envoys to trouble spots around the globe to look, listen and engage. He and Secretary of State Clinton have set records for foreign travel—holding meetings with world leaders and also speaking directly to the world’s populace through televised speeches and active public diplomacy, utilizing every means from town hall meetings to talk shows to Twitter and Facebook. It is this energetic outreach that the Nobel committee cited in announcing the award.

What has the President actually accomplished in his first year?

My students looked for concrete answers in a number of areas, and offer their findings in the newly released report—“Obama’s First Year—The Occidental Report.” On such topics as Iran, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Russia and China, the students looked first at what candidate Obama had said in 2008, and then examined what he has said as President. They follow with a description and analysis of what he has done to accomplish his stated policy goals, and how consistent he has been with his public statements. In conclusion, they provide analysis of the unresolved challenges that Obama faces in the year ahead.

It is a solid piece of work—one that has educational value for concerned citizens at home and abroad. We have posted the report online at the Oxy student-run website, where it is available free to the global community. Copies have also been sent to members of the President’s foreign policy team along with an open invitation for him to return to the Oxy campus and discuss foreign policy with the students.

Oxy students, as do most Americans, realize that the American President is, in many ways, de facto President of the World—but that he is also a politician who is responsible to Americans for his actions. This is a point that Obama made in his Nobel speech when explaining why pursuing the military option in Afghanistan is just and necessary. He is not elected by the world, yet as the American President he provides leadership for it. While American presidents often make history, they do not do so in circumstances of their own choosing. President Obama inherited two wars and other difficult issues like a global recession from his predecessor. It is unrealistic to expect that he would bring world peace and prosperity in his first year in office.

One of the obvious obstacles to viewing Obama as a peacemaker is that he is also a war president—again, a duality that he addressed himself in his speech in Oslo. Of course, an American President can carry a big stick in foreign affairs and use it (as Teddy Roosevelt did in Cuba and the Philippines) and still win the Nobel Peace Prize (as TR did for negotiating an end to the Russo-Japanese War). Obama inherited two war zones from Bush, but with his recent decision to add 30,000 troops to the Afghan theater, he cannot avoid having it labeled, fairly or not, as Obama’s War.

In the last class of the term, we discussed Obama’s decision and his West Point speech announcing his “surge then exit” strategy (although the exit part was quickly toned down by his foreign policy team when they appeared on the Sunday talk shows). The students were not surprised. After all, they had read what he had actually said during the campaign about Afghanistan being the right war. After appointing the hard charging General McChrystal and giving a speech calling it a “war of necessity,” it was all but impossible politically for Obama to

deescalate, at least in the short run. He had created a political box for himself and was not about to step out of it.

While Obama has committed additional young men and women and billions of dollars to the conflict in Afghanistan—a commitment that will likely outlast his Presidency—he has reduced the universality of the conflict. It is no longer a Cosmic War between good and evil without end. Obama has left himself room to deal with other foreign policy challenges on their merits without conflating them with a global crusade. He has made progress on arms control with Russia and on climate change with China—no small matters.

As Year One ends for Obama and the world, my students' report stands, I believe, as a fair assessment of his global leadership. It may be that this is the end of the beginning, and that more innovative and far thinking policies are ahead that would deserve a Nobel prize—or it is possible that we are in for more of the same: engagement but conventional thinking on foreign affairs.

Joy to the World: Good-Bye Bing Crosby, Hello Bob Dylan

March 18, 2010—Huffington Post

There is almost nothing about the state of the world that doesn't seem a little rosier with good holiday music playing in the house. As I write, Bob Dylan's contribution to yuletide cheer—his new album, *Christmas In The Heart*, is on and makes me smile. Next week at Occidental College, where I hold a chair in diplomacy, I will give my annual State of the World and gift advisory talk, offering thoughts on global developments of the past year and also providing on-the-spot guidance on holiday gifting for students and faculty.

Last year, I shared my gift advice with Huffington Post readers ("An Obama Holiday: What to Give a Progressive President and His Team"), so I won't repeat it. Thus far, the Obama administration has not turned out to be as progressive as many supporters had hoped; my recommendations, especially the reading list for the president and his cabinet, are still relevant.

I claim only one success from last year's gift advisory. Fran's Chocolates of Seattle, an Obama favorite from the campaign trail, are now the official chocolate of the White House. Fran is producing a line of smoked salted chocolate caramels in a specially designed box with the presidential seal for the White House, and they are served at dinners and given to overnight guests. The president is going to need a lot of them to keep up his energy now that he has

become a War President. He can also keep up his spirits by playing Dylan's Christmas carols, especially the rousing polka "Must be Santa." Obama might want to invite Bob to sing at a White House holiday party. That would certainly be Change We Need.

In addition to *Christmas in the Heart* which is now our family's all-time favorite holiday album (Good-Bye Bing, Hello Bob), I heartily recommend

Monsters of Folk, a first album from four young folk singers who got together initially to sing for an Obama campaign rally in Nebraska. At least that is the story I heard when my wife and I were in Omaha this fall to lecture. We learned a lot of Omaha lore, including stories about native son Warren Buffett and his quirks. I thought that I had discovered a little known group when I came across the *Monsters of Folk*. Excitedly, this less than musically hip dad, called his daughter who runs a record company in LA to tell of his great find. "Yeah, pops," daughter Julie replied, "I signed the group a few months ago and we just released their album." Well, I still recommend it. Good younger generation folk singers are a scarce commodity.

That's it for music and chocolate. On to my forte—my favorite books of 2009. While inviting secretaries in the Oxy President's office to my talk, I made it clear that holiday goodies will be served and that I would talk about gifts, not just war and global warming. "I know you," one said with a laugh, "You will only talk about books, when I want to hear about diamonds" It's true that I mainly give books as gifts (as well as chocolates and Jackson Browne's ginger cookies). It's my nature.

In the non fiction category, I lean towards economic and political works, and this year is no different. My favorites for 2009:

POLITICS

- *The Imperial Cruise—A Secret History of Empire and War*, by James Bradley. The author uses a little known 1905 historical event—the 100 day diplomatic mission to Asia by Secretary of War William Howard Taft, accompanied by Alice Roosevelt, the President’s celebrity daughter, and a host of Congressmen—to illuminate Teddy Roosevelt’s world view and America’s first moves towards overseas empire. The book is filled with historical revelations and offers a different perspective on the origins of WWII from the common explanation that we were minding our own business when the Japanese suddenly attacked us at Pearl Harbor.
- *The Hawk and The Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan and the History of the Cold War*, by Nicholas Thompson. A grandson of Nitze and a writer for Wired magazine, Thompson has written a thoughtful and elegant historical description of the Cold War through the prism of the lives of Nitze and Kennan, friends and rivals who were both members of the US foreign policy establishment . As with Bradley’s book, I learned new things about top American policy makers and found myself rethinking some of my views of the individuals. And like Bradley, author Thompson knows how to tell a good story.
- *Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement that Shattered the Party*, by Max Blumenthal. This book tells you almost everything that you need to know (and more) about today’s Republican party. Max, son of Washington journalist Sidney Blumenthal, describes and analyzes the conservative evangelicals who dominate the Republican party. He uses the intellectual tools provided by such social thinkers as Eric Hoffer and Eric Fromm to

examine the lives and thought of Newt Gingrich, James Dobson, Sarah Palin, and others and suggests how difficult it will be for the party to represent the majority of Americans. If you are wondering why there are almost no Rockefeller Republicans left in the GOP, read this book.

ECONOMICS

- *Lords of Finance-The Bankers Who Broke The World*, by Liaquat Ahmed. Named “Book of the Year” by the *Financial Times*, this surprisingly lively biographical history describes the key role that the central bankers from the New York Fed, the Bank of England, the Banc de France, and Germany’s Reichsbank played in bringing about and prolonging the Great Depression. It is essential reading for understanding the debate over the current Recession and what reforms might be needed to create a better global financial system. Ahmed is a former investment banker who decided to make himself into a historian, and he has succeeded brilliantly.
- *In Fed We Trust*—by David Wessel, economics editor and columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, is the inside story of Ben Bernanke, and his role in staving off another Depression. At the moment, Bernanke is up for confirmation for a second term as chairman of the Federal Reserve and he is getting attacked from the left and the right for his failings. If you want a truly fair and balanced view of Bernanke and a clear explanation of the inner workings of the Fed, this is the best single book to read. I had Wessel speak on the Oxy campus, and students told me it was one of the most informative talks on economics that they had ever heard.
- *The Snowball—Warren Buffett and the Business of Life*, by Alice Schroeder. If you

can read just one biography of a business leader, this is the one. An almost but not quite authorized bio, the book provides a portrait of The Oracle of Omaha, quirks and all. Buffet is an investment genius; he is also a man with some odd habits. However, his values-based approach to investing has great merit and, as he has proved, works over the long term to produce great wealth. If anyone you know is thinking about a career in business, then give them this book as a kind of spiritual guide and perhaps a cautionary tale on living a meaningful life.

FICTION

On the fiction side of the ledger, my favorite book of the year (and maybe of all time) is the Millennium Trilogy by Swedish journalist Stieg Larsson. The three books in the series—*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*—gave me and my wife and most of our friends hours of pleasurable reading. We are still passing around the final volume in the British edition (it's not yet available in the US). Larsson, who sadly died after finishing the series, was founder and editor-in-chief of a political magazine, and an expert on right-wing extremists and anti-democratic organizations. His magazine, *Expo*, was similar to *Ramparts*, the crusading West Coast journal of the 60s and 70s, and an editor of such a magazine plays a lead role in the novels. While drawing on his own experience and real life events involving the Swedish security services and big business, Larsson has created one of the more original and appealing heroines to appear in crime or thriller fiction in years. The series is perfect gift for family and friends who like their fiction grounded in the real world of politics and economics.

During too many plane rides and restless late nights, I read novels by detective fiction writers who set their stories in foreign countries. I like books where the writing is good, clean and crisp, the settings realistic, and where I learn something new. If the books below intrigue you as gifts, you can pick up others in the series.

- *The Mao Case*—the latest entry in the Inspector Chen series written by Qiu Xiaolong, a native of Shanghai, who came to Washington University, St Louis, to study T.S. Eliot, got his PhD in comparative lit, and stayed to teach and to write detective fiction. His elegantly written series is one of the best depictions of contemporary Chinese society that you can find.
- *Bamboo and Blood*—the third in the Inspector O series, improbably set in North Korea. Author James Church, a pseudonym for a former US government official, knows the country well and has managed to penetrate this isolated, difficult outlier in the international system. In recounting the fictional adventures of O, an inspector in the Ministry of Public Security in Pyongyang, he provides a better feel for life in North Korea than most think tank studies or intelligence reports.
- *The Merry Misogynist*—a Dr. Siri Investigation set in Laos, the sixth entry in this delectable series written by Colin Cotterill, a Brit who worked in Laos as an aid worker before becoming a full time writer. The protagonist, Dr. Siri, is the coroner for the communist run government. The books explore recent political history in southeast Asia, as well as the role of religion and culture in Laotian society.
- *Dark Dreams*— the second in the Commander Jana Matinova Investigations, a new series by UCLA law graduate Michael

Genelin who served as a consultant for the State Department in Central Europe, and who knows his way around Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, where his heroine serves as a commander in the national police force. The books serve as compelling introductions to the under side of life in post-Communist Europe.

- *Hypothermia*—book six in the chilly Reykjavik detective series by Arnaldur Indridason. The author's brooding hero is Erlendur, a detective in Iceland's capital, whose personal problems crop up as he tries to solve brutal crimes. One of the first novels in the series, *Jar City*, has been made into a good film and is available on DVD with English subtitles. Now that Iceland has suffered a severe economic meltdown, it will be interesting to see if Indridason turns to banks and financiers as a setting for an upcoming book.
- *Buried Strangers*—the second in a new series, the Chief Inspector Mario Silva Investigations by Leighton Gage, set in modern day Brazil. The hero is the chief inspector for criminal matters in the Federal police in the capital, Brasilia, but he ranges across the country from Sao Paulo to the Amazon in pursuit of the bad guys, often politically connected ones. Author Gage is married to a Brazilian and lives part of the year in Brazil. The books provide a primer on the politics and economics of an emerging regional super power, and offer an introduction to the contradictions of wealth and poverty in Brazilian society.
- *The Samaritan's Secret*—the third Omar Yussef novel, set in today's Palestinian territories, written by Matt Rees, an Australian who served for six years as Time's Jerusalem bureau chief. The books provide a thoughtful look at the contemporary Middle East, giving a voice

through the aged hero, Omar Yussef, a teacher at a UN school, to the concerns of the Palestinian people as well as to the complexities of the region's centuries long disputes over land and religion.

OBAMA'S WAR AND FICTION

When Richard Holbrooke was first appointed special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I suggested that he read James Michener's novel *Caravans*, a thriller with a State Department hero set in the Afghanistan of the 1950s. Predictably he told me that he had already read it, as well as the adventure novel *Flashman* about a British soldier fighting in the Afghan Wars of the nineteenth century (written by George MacDonald Fraser). It's almost impossible to one up Dick Holbrooke on anything, but I did recommend to him—and to other friends in the Obama administration—two cautionary novels to read set in Pakistan:

- *The Case of Exploding Mangoes*, by Mohammed Hanif, a graduate of the Pakistan Air Force Academy, who left the military to take up a career in journalism. The book is a Pakistani version of *Catch-22* (the famous Joseph Heller war novel), describing an investigation into the death of General Zia who was killed along with the US ambassador in a mysterious plane crash in 1988. The book is a useful introduction to President Obama's key ally in the struggle against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.
- *Moghul Buffet*—one of the few mystery novels set in contemporary Pakistan. The author, Cheryl Benard, knows the terrain and provides a detailed description of Peshawar, one of the most dangerous cities in south Asia. Benard offers up a disturbing portrait of the conditions of life for most Pakistani women. It is another valuable

contribution from the editors of the Soho Press' international mystery series.

AND MY WIFE RECOMMENDS

On the lighter side, my wife Sue's favorite new mystery author is our family friend, British journalist Martin Walker, who uses the setting of his summer home in the Bordeaux region of France to depict the adventures of Bruno, Chief of Police (the title of the first in the series), who roots out wrong doing while living well. The second book, *The Dark Vineyard*, explores wine and dark deeds. The novels would make great BBC films.

One of our family holiday pastimes is watching mystery novels that have been made into good films.

We pile on to our couch along with the dogs and one of the cats, get comfy, and tune into another county's social problems. The essential gift for friends and relatives who might enjoy detective films is a universal DVD player—one that will play DVDs from all regions of the world. Many of the best detective film series are only available from Europe or Australia, and require a DVD player that can show them (they cost almost the same as US region players, so it's not a financial stretch). Once outfitted, you can order DVDs online from any country and enjoy them in the comfort of your own home.

This has enabled us to watch the Inspector Montalbano series based on the detective novels of Andrea Camilleri set in Sicily made by Italian broadcasting RAI which features a superb actor on whom Sue has a big crush, and a number of excellent series from Scandinavia, including films based on the Inspector Wallander books by Henning Mankell and on the detective novels of Helene Tunstam featuring her heroine Irene Huss, as well as great made for TV series from

Denmark like *The Eagle* and *Unit One*. Australia also produces enjoyable series set in the Outback, as well as in Melbourne and Sydney. A Google search will turn up online stores, including Amazon UK and SBS in Australia, from which you can order the films.

STATE OF THE WORLD—LATER FOR THAT—GO SHOPPING

In my post next time, I will discuss the State of the World and talk about my students' report on Obama's First Year in foreign policy. For now, as someone—maybe it was George Bush—famously said: "When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping." By shopping you are doing your bit to stimulate the economy and dig into the pesky ten percent unemployment rate. I'd rather that President Obama had invited folks to go shopping, than to the meaningless Jobs Summit this week at the White House.

P.S. HIP MUSIC UPDATE

I've checked in with my music industry daughter and have three Indie bands that deserve making the CD gift list: *Sea Wolf* (new album, "White Water, White Bloom"), *Band of Skulls* (new album, "Baby Darling Doll Face Honey"), and *Grizzly Bear*. All three played at the LA concert for the premiere of the new *Twilight* series movie—and *Band of Skulls* is a client of my daughter's company *Shangrila Music*.

All very cool. Check them out. The White House needs to do an Indie Band night and expand the Obama daughters' horizons beyond The Jonas Brothers.

In response to this post, I have been receiving advice from friends and readers on their favorite holiday albums. Some interesting suggestions: Sting's holiday album, "If On A Winter's Night"; a collection of jazz and R&B

holiday classics—"Hipsters' Holiday"; and "The Best of B.B. King: Christmas Collection" (I once hosted B.B. King when he sang at the Pori Jazz Festival in Finland). And there is always Elvis' "Blue Christmas" collection. Rock on.

Holiday Greetings to one and all from the
Ambasadude.

Passage to India: Monsoon Wedding Meets Slumdog Professor

April 26, 2010—Huffington Post

A few weeks ago in New Delhi it felt like I had walked on to the set of *A Great Big Indian Wedding*, become a cast member, and had the film become reality.

My wife Sue and I were members of an Indian wedding—dancing, singing, eating, and laughing to celebrate the marriage of the youngest son of one of our oldest Indian friends. I had carried the groom on my shoulders around Disneyland when he was seven, and now Sue had henna tattoos on her arms, and I wore a colorful Sikh turban, and danced in the street in front of his horse as Ateesh was led to the wedding tent and the Sikh altar.

Our presence was a testament to the value of study abroad programs and to the upside of globalization. In 1967, my sister Brooke (sadly deceased last year) went on the Experiment in International Living and was placed with the Singh family at 179 Golf Links Road, New Delhi. The Singh family had established itself through the efforts of the family patriarch Sir Sobha Singh, who helped construct New Delhi as the capital of British India.

In 1911, the British moved the capital of their Indian empire to Delhi, a city with a thousand year old history and once capital of the Mughal empire, which had fallen on hard times, and been almost completely razed by the British after the Mutiny of 1857. A British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens was given the task of laying out New Delhi as an Imperial capital—a grandiose city not unlike Washington, DC, and he proceeded to design broad avenues, huge traffic circles and monumental buildings. He needed local help, of course, to construct the new city and his right hand man

was Sobha Singh, great grandfather of the groom.

Later knighted for his efforts, Sir Sobha Singh has a major street named after him. His daughter-in-law Amarjit (grandmother of the groom) married and settled at 179 Golf Links in a house built by her husband Bhagwant Singh, in a pleasant housing estate built around small parks, and this is where my sister lived as a member of the Singh family, and where we celebrated with wedding lunches and dinners. In 1971, I visited India and stayed at the Singh home, and I brought a strobe light for the Singh's son, Pami, who had just opened *The Cellar*, the first discotheque in New Delhi. At the time, the Indian economy was a closed, state administered system which Nehru modeled after Soviet Five Year plans, and it was difficult to obtain foreign currency to import products, especially to open a dance club.

A year later, another Singh family member, younger son Tejbir came to the US to study for his MA at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and we lived near one another while I taught at Tufts and worked at the Boston Phoenix, one of the first alternative weeklies. We shared meals and talked the student talk of global social change. After his studies, Tejbir returned to India to become a film maker and married his sweetheart Mala who came from a prominent left wing journalist family. Later, Tejbir and Mala took over editing and publishing the monthly magazine *Seminar*, founded by Mala's parents, and today it is the leading public policy journal in India.

Tejbir's sister Geeta—my sister's "Indian sister"—also studied abroad. She went to

Paris to study literature and met a young Indian man from Calcutta named Nayan Chanda, who chose Paris for his studies because of an interest in SE Asia and above all, to escape all things British which had seemed culturally stifling to him in India. Geeta and Nayan made a marriage of love not an arranged marriage (still relatively uncommon today among Indian families), and followed careers outside the country.

Nayan became a reporter for the Far Eastern Economic Review, covering the wars in Indo-China, and made Hong Kong his home base where I visited them on my working trips to China. Geeta became a professor of Indian literature. Nayan moved on to the *Wall Street Journal* in New York, and a few years later settled in New Haven where he founded and edits Yale's Global Online journal, and directs publications at Yale's Center for the Study of Globalization. Geeta teaches womens literature and Indian literature. Along the way, they sent their boys Amit and Ateesh to Princeton and Brown. Nayan has written one of the best books on globalization, *Bound Together*, and I have hosted him at Occidental where I teach. His slide show presentation on the history of the human journey out of Africa to today's global civilization is so compelling and well told that the Indian Defense college asks him to lecture at their annual security seminar. I have also heard him deliver it to meetings of defense chiefs in Asia and the Middle East where he holds military men's attention while he explains how we are all "bound together" as human beings.

Globalization has greatly affected India, especially in recent decades. New Delhi has changed greatly since my first visit in 1971. Today it is a mega city of over fifteen million with middle class suburbs, shopping malls, traffic jams, and pollution. Like its rival China, India has opened its economy to the world,

embraced private enterprise, and its growth rate and place on the world stage have increased tremendously. It is also a country of extreme wealth and poverty, religious tensions, and still keeps many women in second class citizenship. During the visit, my wife read the book, *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India*, written by our friend Elizabeth Bumiller, who served as the Washington Post correspondent in the country in the 1980s. Sadly, it is not much out of date. Most Indian women move into their husband's households and are subject to the will and whims of his family and their mother-in-laws. Every year hundreds of deaths of young brides by "accidental kitchen fires" are reported, after the young women have disappointed the husband's family.

Like his parents, Ateesh Chanda made a marriage of love, meeting his partner Shideh Shafie, an Iranian-American doctor in residence in New York City where he had taken a job as a lawyer. The bride's specialty is emergency medicine, and it proved useful on the first night of the wedding festivities when an unexpected torrential rain brought down the wedding tent on the head of her mother-in-law Geeta who had to be taken to the ER for stitches. Happily, Geeta returned to the party in time for dancing and singing when the two families make jokes to one another and "compete" on the dance floor. Although her parents live in the States, the bride had a large contingent of Iranian relatives fly in for the wedding, and we learned that Iranians certainly know how to party. Iranian women of all ages took to the dance floor with enthusiasm and style, and put on moves that we were certain would get them arrested back home. (Apparently, a lot of hearty partying goes on behind closed doors back in Iran.) The Iranian connection made the weekend even more globalized.

On an evening after the wedding had concluded, Tejbir and Mala Singh hosted a dinner party for us to meet some leading Delhi authors, including two British ex-pats, William Dalrymple and Sam Miller. The best way to understand and to experience Delhi from a far is to read their books—City of Djinns by Will Dalrymple which explores the Mughal history still evident in today's Delhi, and Miller's Delhi-Adventures in a Megacity, a wonderful walking tour of Delhi's neighborhoods—not an easy undertaking in the clogged, noisy, traffic-ridden city. (Our attempts at walking around town almost got us run over crossing a traffic circle and followed by poorer residents trying to sell us their wares.) Our hostess Mala is the author of the new book, New Delhi: Making of a Capital (by Malvika Singh), which includes pictures and descriptions of the role that Sobha Singh played in the building of the city.

We also heard about the Jaipur Literary Festival, an invention of Will Dalrymple with support from Mala and other leading Delhi authors, which is fast becoming a must-attend global venue not unlike Davos or Sundance in its early days. An Indian journalist at dinner recounted his skepticism about President Obama and US foreign policy in the region. While the Bush administration had excellent official relations with India and bent over backward to support India's nuclear posture, many in the Indian elite feel that Obama doesn't understand India nor care about it (although his first official state dinner was for the Indian prime minister). I found no Obama "collectibles" in the Indian street markets, and it is true that there is no person of stature in the Obama administration comparable to Strobe Talbott who handled US-India relations in Clinton or to Nick Burns who had the India portfolio at State in Bush. The Indian government objected successfully to having Obama give special envoy Richard Holbrooke

that role, fearing, no doubt correctly, that Holbrooke would involve himself in India's struggle with Pakistan over the disputed area of Kashmir. (Indian and Pakistani diplomats are meeting this weekend to discuss the matter and other issues of dispute between the two countries.)

India's relationship with Pakistan continues to be fraught with tension. While we were there, the local newspapers were filled with reports of right wing Hindu nationalist attacks on Bollywood's most famous actor, Shahrukh Khan, who had spoken out in favor of allowing Pakistani cricket players to be drafted in to the Indian cricket league. The extremist group (not dissimilar to right wing religious groups in the US who agitate against evolution or other issues) threatened to block the opening of the actor's new film, "My Name Is Khan," but he stood up to them and the film opened without serious incident. There was also a bombing of a German bakery catering to foreigners in Mumbai, blamed on Muslim terrorists trained in Pakistan.

I did my duty as a dinner guest and answered questions about President Obama's policies in Afghanistan and Pakistan (I tried to explain them, not defend them), but my heart wasn't in it. I wanted to keep on celebrating the upside of globalization—the myriad tastes of Indian cuisine, the rich tradition of dance and song, the world class lattes at Barirsta (the local equivalent of Starbucks—did you know that barista is an Indian word), the clothes that I had purchased at Fabindia, a successful chain of clothing stores founded by an Indian-American family, the crafts we found at The Shop, the latest business venture of Pami Singh and his sons—not the downside of religious strife, war and terrorism.

Foreign policy must wait when weddings call. Next month, Sue and I are off to Santiago

where our goddaughter Emily is marrying Rudolfo, her sweetheart whom she met while studying abroad on a University of California program (another example of the returns on foreign study). I plan to eat, dance and party and not worry about Obama's Latin American foreign policy.

POSTSCRIPT: A PRIMER ON INDIA

If you want to read more on India, here is a list of my favorite books:

- *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India*, by Edward Luce, former Financial Times correspondent in New Delhi, is the best single introduction to the country. A model of foreign reporting, clear writing and thoughtful analysis.
- *Nine Lives—In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, by William Dalrymple, is an exploration of how traditional religious beliefs are transformed by today's globalized society. Dalrymple is an exceptional writer and reporter, and his history books like *The Last Mughal*, and his travel books on India and the region are all worth purchasing.
- *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* by Ramchandra Guha, is the single best history of modern India.
- *Vishnu's Crowded Temple: India Since the Great Rebellion* by Maria Misra, tells the story of late British India and brings it forward to the present. A good companion to Guha's work.
- *Making India Work* by William Bissell, is a policy book by the current director of Fabindia, the company founded by his father who went to India on a Ford Foundation grant, met an Indian woman

(Bim Bissell, a noted figure in Delhi society whom we met at the wedding), and stayed to start a textile company. Will Bissell took over the company at 31 after his father's death and wove over 40,000 artisans into a reliable supply chain focusing on the domestic market. Today, Fabindia has 110 stores and has become one of India's leading national brands. In the book, Bissell gives his prescriptions for downsizing India's inefficient bureaucracy, improving its struggling educational system, and revitalizing neighborhood democracy.

Three of my other best reads on India include, *Freedom At Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre, a cinematic like recounting of the moment when British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan; *Ambassador's Journal* by John Kenneth Galbraith, who served as JFK's diplomat to India in the 1960s; and *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* by Louis Fischer, one of the great journalists of the 20th century. In the fiction category (not the serious novels you will find in a proper course on modern Indian literature), I recommend *The Case of the Missing Servant* by Tarquin Hall, the first in a new detective series set in New Delhi introducing Vash Puri, self-proclaimed "India's Greatest Detective," *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra, a Dickensian detective novel set in today's Mumbai, and *Delhi Noir*, a collection of short detective fiction edited by Hirsh Sawhey which explores the darker side of Indian life. There are too many Bollywood and Merchant/Ivory films to recommend any particular ones. Instead, you can start your Indian odyssey at home with the BBC documentary, *The Story of India*, narrated by historian Michael Wood. Of course, if you have not seen *Monsoon Wedding* or *Slumdog Millionaire*, you are missing out on great treats.

The Occidental President: Obama and Teachable Moments

May 11, 2010—Huffington Post

In his new biography *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, author David Remnick describes how a young Barry Obama discovered the value of a liberal arts education.

During his two years at Occidental College in Los Angeles, one of the nation's leading liberal arts colleges, Obama learned to read and to think critically. He took courses in American and European political philosophy from the school's renowned professor Roger Boesche. He read works of magical fiction by Latin American authors. He met American black students and engaged in nights of debate and discussion on the politics of the day—and he got to know foreign students from countries such as Pakistan and India. He learned about his strengths and his weaknesses. He was not good enough to become a professional basketball player, but he could give a political speech in public—against apartheid—and move a crowd. He could express himself with the written word, even publish his poems in the school literary magazine.

Above all, he became comfortable in his own skin. As *Newsweek* put it in a cover article during the campaign, it was "When Barry Became Barack." He moved on to Columbia where Oxy had an exchange program, and then to Harvard Law with a new found sense of identity and purpose.

Because the truth about Obama at Oxy is a good story (he did not, as conservatives would have it, become indoctrinated by Marxists or Feminists, nor was he recruited by the CIA or Jihadists as some conspiracy bloggers now claim), Occidental is proud to claim him as an exemplar of the liberal arts

education which small colleges provide. During the campaign, the Oxy campus store had fun with the Obama brand, producing a line of "BarOxyWear" clothing (the best selling, "Change We Need" diaper pants, the Barack Rocks t-shirt), and Obama mugs and hats. KCET, the local public TV station, produced a special report on Obama at Oxy, and national and world wide press coverage was largely favorable.

When the new Oxy President, Harvard trained scholar Jonathan Veitch, arrived on campus last fall he challenged faculty and administrators to go beyond t-shirts and to utilize the Obama connection to Oxy for ongoing educational purposes. To illustrate the liberal arts education that Obama received at Oxy, an exhibition of the books Obama read in Professor Boesche's political philosophy courses was mounted in the book store, and a self-guided tour of "Obama at Oxy" which showed where he had delivered his first political speech and where he took classes was prepared. Along with a colleague in the Politics department, Professor Caroline Heldman, I was asked to teach a course called "Obama and the Issues—the Challenge of Change." The idea was to use Obama's first year and half in office as a series of teachable moments (one of his favorite phrases) to examine his political leadership and the terrain on which he exercises it.

Because it was a course in history as it happens, there were no ideal texts. We found one collection of essays—*Obama: Year One*—written by leading political scientists including my cousin David Magleby, Dean of Brigham Young University, who contributed an essay on how Obama's use of the Internet has changed Presidential campaigns. We also

assigned Obama's own campaign book, *The Audacity of Hope*. Mainly, we assigned articles on line from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and on line sites such as POLITICO. (For professors teaching such a course in the future, there is now the just published book by *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter—*The Promise—President Obama, Year One*—a well reported accounting of the "inside story" of the Obama administration, and in the fall, Bob Woodward will be bringing out his account of Obama's Presidency.)

We started the course with a terrific PBS documentary, *Dreams of Obama*, on his life up to winning the Presidency. We then looked for "experts" rather than advocates who could describe the politics of the issues facing Obama when he took office and analyze how he has dealt with these challenges.

On foreign policy, we invited *Washington Post* editor David Hoffman (winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize for his book on US-Russian nuclear weapons) to talk on Obama and a Nuclear Free World. UC Davis law professor Diane Amann explained the complicated legal issues around Obama's promise to close Guantanamo, and UN expert Steve Schlesinger described Obama's use of the UN in his foreign policy. Former NYT reporter Stephan Kinzer presented the case for the importance of Iran and Turkey as possible US allies in making a durable peace in the Middle East.

On the domestic front, Peter Goodman, the *New York Times* economic correspondent, analyzed how Obama has responded to the financial meltdown and subsequent recession. Another NYTimes reporter, John Broder, explained the politics of climate change legislation. Georgetown Law Professor Peter Edelman outlined Obama's policies towards the poor, and Dr. Gene

Oppenheim of Kaiser Permanente explicated the debate over national health care legislation. Former NJ legislator Gordon MacInnes examined Obama's approach to educational reform, and computer industry guru Daniel Suarez talked about the hidden dangers of social media and the Obama administration's approach to the expansion and use of the Internet.

We did not neglect politics. We invited Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, to present the Republican critique of Obama's policies and explain the appeal of the Tea Party. Author Robert Kuttner presented a progressive critique of Obama's approach to reform, especially his "audacity of caution." And in the category of "politics is often not rational," we brought black conservative Rev. Jesse Peterson—a regular on Fox News—to campus. He called President Obama "trash," a "liar," and a "socialist," and challenged students to rethink their liberal ideas.

Because the course was history in real time (and with over 100 students and no teaching assistants) we did not give tests. Instead, students were organized into teams around projects that ranged from the scholarly to the artistic to the activist. One group immediately set up an excellent course blog which allowed students to react to course speakers and to post their own research on issues.

On the research side, there was the Nation Building At Home group which produced issue briefs on US prisons, education, energy policy, New Orleans after Katrina, and pollution. The Conspiracy group investigated theories about Obama ranging from assertions that he is the Devil and the anti-Christ to contentions that he applied to Occidental under the Indonesian name Soetoro (his mother's second husband) and that Oxy is "hiding" his real application.

Another group analyzed Obama's major speeches and collected them with editorial notes ready for Professor Boesche to write an introduction and then publish as the Occidental edition. The Obama Family Tree team researched Barack and Michelle's ancestors and showed how they are related to many famous (and white) Americans. Going global, the Obama and Pop Culture group collected artifacts and images of the President from around world including African textiles, action comic books, and an assortment of dolls and figures. A selection of the items is now on exhibition in the Occidental Library and can also be viewed (here).

The Obama and Oxy group produced a slide show of Obama imagery on the blog and worked with the college communications staff on finalizing the Obama self-guided walking tour brochure—and The Bring Barack Back group posted clever videos on You Tube inviting Obama to return to campus.

In the creative category, one team worked with the Oxy Art department to produce a series of beautiful Obama issues posters. Another group designed and produced the board game Obama—Road to the White House, and another worked on Obama administration trading cards. Led by a remarkable young woman student from Jamaica, the Obama Poetry Slam team organized and produced on campus a night of spoken word performances praising and criticizing Obama. (Words to some of the "raps" are on the course blog.) One of the best was titled "Are You Really My Friend," and it concluded:

*Obama, Obama
are you really my friend
is it really the end of racism
or a clever electoral vote.....
But I'm still not mad at you*

*cause I know the skin heads want to
assassinate you
and I'm not even asking you to pass some
test*

*I just expected a little more from a
community activist*

*A little bit more than just a puppet on strings
to those international thugs of material
dreams*

Obama, Obama

Are you really our friend

Or is it all pretend

In the course finale, a team led by a young man, himself an aspiring, Obama-like politician, organized a symposium (I suggested Teach-in, but students said, "Too 60s, prof"), titled

"Deconstructing Obama," and invited such national experts as *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, the Huffington Post's political editor Tom Edsall, and *LA Times* columnist and radio show host, Oxy grad Patt Morrison, to discuss Obama as a political leader and examine how he has responded to opposition from the right and pressure from the left. The symposium was open to the entire campus and to the public, and included a display of course projects such as the Obama posters, the Obama board game, and the Obama family tree (displayed on a 15 foot high sheet outside of Thorne Hall).

Students in the course, other Oxy students, and even some alumni (including one Tea Party sympathizer) debated the role of race on Obama's Presidency, his leadership style, and whether or not he has fulfilled the promises he made during the campaign or provided the "audacity of hope" he said was needed by the nation.

Our goal as professors was not to advocate but to instruct—to provide students with the information and ideas to gain a more nuanced view of Barack Obama, his

Presidency, and of the challenge that those who advocate political change face in the United States from entrenched interests on all sides of the political spectrum. As best we can tell, our students came away with a deeper appreciation for the complexities of American politics—at home and abroad—and a clearer view for themselves of how they feel about their Occidental President, Barack Obama.

Can we sum up their collective views? Probably not. Perhaps, the recent cover of MAD magazine might do it best. Alfred E. Neuman, the magazine's iconic mascot, is wearing a t-shirt that says, "I (heart sign) Obama" and the letters "ed" have been penciled in. Our students are no longer in love with the idea of an Oxy President, but they like the idea that he is in the White House using his liberal arts education to struggle with the issues of the day—and they are well prepared to ask him tough questions about his Presidency when he returns to campus.

As for me, I'm ready to challenge him to some pick-up basketball in the Oxy gym.

Happy Days Are Not Here Again: Obama, China and the Coming Great Contraction

August 25, 2010—Huffington Post

Happy Days are not coming any time soon to America—and not to most of the world.

This summer has convinced me that it is realistic—not pessimistic or fatalistic—to believe that we have reached the twilight of the oil-industrial age. A global reckoning is coming sooner than we would wish, and the US government and President Obama, sadly, are not stepping up to the leadership plate.

Even the short run looks gloomy, and the slightly longer run—the next twenty to thirty years—could be a turning point in human history.

You only have to turn on the TV news or read the newspapers to know that short-run economic developments are not encouraging. The recovery is tepid. The housing market has stalled badly. Unemployment remains above 10 percent in many states, including mine of California—and where there is recovery, it is a jobless one. President Obama and his economic team took necessary but insufficient steps in responding to the economic crisis that they inherited. I agree with Minority Leader John Boehner that Obama should fire Summers, Geithner and the rest of his economic team—but not because they have done too much; rather, they have done too little. I'd throw in Rahm Emanuel and other White House political strategists too for a gross failure to communicate. As Jonathan Alter in his book, *The Promise*, and John Judis in the current *New Republic* ("The Unnecessary Fall of Barack Obama," September 2, 2010) have analyzed, Obama's advisers appear to be more concerned with protecting the Obama

brand than leading the Democratic Party, expanding their political base, or effectively taking on Republicans. They have let an ascendant Right capture the angry mood of a troubled public and provide faux explanations—too much government, too much regulation, too large a deficit—and a phony but compelling political narrative of socialism run amok in Washington, D.C. The outlook for Democrats in the midterm elections is not good, and it will surprise few political commentators if Obama and his party lose at least one house of Congress. Further political gridlock will ensue—at least for the remaining two years of Obama's presidency.

Similarly with the economic issue, the Obama White House has blown a green opportunity with its slow and lackluster response to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, once an adviser and supporter of Obama's, William Pfaff ("*What Obama Should Have Said to BP*," *New York Review of Books*) and others on the "professional left," as the White House likes to dismiss them, pointed out the stronger options that Obama had for responding to the situation and to BP's environmentally criminal action. Instead of using the disaster to stand up to a major oil company and to build support for passing at least a halfway-decent climate-change bill, Obama let the moment escape. Support for Senator Kerry's legislative efforts in the Senate evaporated and will not come again in Obama's first term. White House talk of "green jobs" as part of the poorly conceived and badly marketed stimulus package now sounds hollow and almost pathetic, in spite of good intentions and Obama's earlier green campaign rhetoric.

These political failures are not only disappointing to those who had hopes for a transformational Obama presidency and for the “change we need” in the country’s economic and environmental policies; they have reduced the potential for international US leadership on these vital issues.

This summer I visited the eco-municipality of Visby, one of the greenest cities in Sweden on the island of Gotland—once a Viking raiding center and later a major trading city in the Hanseatic League. An idealistic band of younger Finns and Swedes has initiated the World Ecological Forum in hopes that it might become a kind of “green Davos” where business, political and scientific leaders can find ways to build a genuinely sustainable future. I served as chair of the Plenary Sessions and also provided an analysis for participants of US green politics from progressive cities such as Santa Monica and Portland to state governments such as Vermont and California, on up to the frustrating politics of Congress. (A new book, *The Climate War: True Believers, Power Brokers, and the Fight to Save the Earth*, by Eric Pooley, is a good and reliable report on the state of US climate-change politics.)

The most important speech of the conference was the address by Johan Rockstrom, a professor of natural resource management at Stockholm University and head of the Stockholm Environmental Research Institute. Rockstrom received the Forum’s Global Impact award for outstanding environmental publication, given for his article, “A Safe Operating Space for Humanity” (*Nature*, vol. 461/24, September 2009). Rockstrom is a compelling scientific speaker who knows how to hold an audience (perhaps Davis Guggenheim, who directed Al Gore in *An Inconvenient Truth*, should make a short documentary of Rockstrom’s presentation). The message that Rockstrom expounded is

very sobering—he is not alarmist, but his presentation is highly alarming.

He and his colleagues have worked out the biophysical conditions that allowed human beings to appear and then prosper on the planet—the safe operating conditions for humanity. They have quantified nine interlinked planetary conditions and their boundaries, which include climate change, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and other eco-indicators necessary for human survival and civilized development. Three of these boundaries have already been overstepped because of growing global reliance on fossil fuels, industrialized forms of agriculture, and overuse of natural resources. The world economy is fast approaching almost all of the other boundaries.

Rockstrom and his colleagues’ work and analysis deserves the widest possible attention—yet few public figures in the US seem to have heard of him.

Sweden, along with other Scandinavian countries and perhaps New Zealand, has the greenest national policies on the planet. Yet, even Sweden cannot go it alone. Rockstrom explained to me that, by being linked to the global economy, his country cannot be carbon neutral because the products it imports are not manufactured to be. Certainly, countries like Sweden and even green US cities (described in the new book, *Emerald Cities: Urban Sustainability and Economic Development*, by Joan Fitzgerald) can be exemplars of sustainable policies and take political leadership to argue for them beyond their borders, but there is no local or one-country solution to the boundary dangers that Rockstrom describes. In this case, playing over the line can be a deadly game for humanity.

China is a major case in point. The second day of the World Ecological Forum was devoted almost entirely to China and its supposedly new green national policies. We heard from Chinese officials as well as from global business consultants as to how the Chinese government could simply mandate new green policies and that, in a short matter of time, the immense Chinese auto industry (now the largest in the world) would be all electric and all Chinese cities would soon be adopting strict environmental and sustainable policies. *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman and other commentators have expressed similarly optimistic assessments. Of course, it sounds nice and straightforward that a non-elected government can simply issue green rules by fiat and everyone will follow them—but I am not convinced that it will be that easy. China's environmental track record in its recent rush to industrialization and modernization has not been reassuring. Elizabeth C. Economy, in her book, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future*, and Jonathan Watts, in his journalistic book, *When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind—Or Destroy It*, are among many firsthand observers who have amply documented the country's horrifying amount of air, water and soil pollution. Anyone who has visited China in recent years can view the air pollution, dirty rivers, incredible traffic jams, and endless urbanization for themselves.

I don't believe that the Chinese and its current government will save us—but they could be part of a global solution crafted and promoted by the United States, if we have the political will to do it.

Later in the summer, my wife and I visited Vermont—probably the greenest state in the country. We had lunch with a young editor of Chelsea Green Press, one of the leading publishers of books, on sustainable farming,

organic living, sustainable economics and green politics, and we paid homage to Ben and Jerry's, the home of caring capitalism. If any state is going to manage the coming Great Contraction of the global economy, it might well be Vermont. It is state of small-sized cities, independent farms, and a highly-active, locally-based food production and distribution movement. While in Vermont, I finished James Kunstler's book, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the End of Oil, Climate Change, and other Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-First Century*. The author used to write for me and my fellow editors at the alternative newspaper, the Boston Phoenix, back in the 1970s. He is a solid journalist and nuanced critic of American auto-based urban development (see his earlier book, *The Geography of Nowhere*). *The Long Emergency* is a harsh and hardheaded view of the decades ahead and what might happen in the US as the biophysical boundaries analyzed by Rockstrom are overstepped. It is a reminder that environmentally induced change is a far greater danger to Americans than any form of terrorism.

In Kunstler's view, semi-rural states such as Vermont and Oregon will fare better in the difficult decades ahead—but they will still not escape the overall economic downturn that is coming. He calls it "The Long Emergency." I prefer the term "The Great Contraction," taken from a sci-fi novel that I read this summer, *The Wind-Up Girl*, by Paolo Bacigalupi (listed by *Time* as one of the ten best books of 2009). It is set in a future Bangkok, protected by huge dikes from rising seas caused by global warming, powered by bioengineered elephants and beset by food plagues caused by corporate bioengineered crops. In this future world, global trade relies on wind-powered clipper ships and lighter than air blimps. It is not a happy place.

Our final trip of the summer was to Montana to a friend's ranch where we could hardly escape noticing how many trees had been destroyed by an infestation of the pine beetle. Thousands of once verdant green trees have turned brown, cracked and brittle. Our friend's teenage daughters told me that global warming was to blame. Curious, I did some quick research and learned that the pine beetle has killed more trees in recent years than all forest fires in the West. A combination of drought, warmer, drier weather, and warmer winters, has allowed the pine beetle to expand its range to higher elevations and devastate forests in Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Washington. Cold winters used to kill off many of the beetles and prevent them from reaching these forests. Since 2010 was the warmest year in recorded human history (and most scientists attribute this to climate change), the betting is on the beetles for the future. Mother Nature is not greatly impressed by Republican denials of scientific facts. Needless to say, these reality deniers are not promoting a religious revival of American Indian beliefs either—of respect for the land and a desire to live in harmony with the earth. Our teenage friends had been watching the film *Dances With Wolves* and found themselves, not surprisingly, moved by the Indians' plight. The US record on that topic is not heartening—and the main message from today's tribes is that if you build a casino, the punters will come.

From sweltering heat in Moscow to killer floods in Pakistan, the weather this summer has been yet another warning sign. If you doubt that it is going to get even wilder and weirder (and hotter) in the coming decades, then read scientist Heidi Cullen's new book, *The Weather of the Future: Heat Waves, Extreme Storms, and Other Scenes from a Climate-Changed Planet*—just the facts, and they are troubling. These environmental

changes will have severe economic as well as social and political consequences. The golden age of globalization has already come to an end. If we don't move more rapidly towards a greener globalization, then we are in for both economic contraction and environmental disorder. There will be famine, floods and plagues of Biblical proportions.

In the short run—the next few decades—the future is not going to be an easy place. Whether it gets better or worse after that, we cannot know—but it seems certain that our actions now and in the coming years will determine the answer.

At a final conference lunch overlooking the Baltic Sea, I asked Rockstrom whether we are at the point of no return. He said that it is true we have passed the peak production of oil, that some effects of climate change are already here, and that we have injured some biological realms—but the earth is not yet beyond repair. Like most Swedes, a master of calm understatement, Johan said that it is not too late to change course. We can preserve a safe and healthy operating planet for humanity and perhaps build a decent, sustainable and more equitable human society. We have time—but he could not say exactly how much. When I pressed him, he said probably until the middle of the century—about thirty or forty years or so, at which point, if we haven't already begun to change course, then we will reach a tipping point and life on the planet will go downhill at a much more rapid pace.

What do we need to do as Americans? Tom Friedman thinks we need a Green Tea Party—and perhaps that would help. We certainly need a broader-based environmental movement that links environmental threats clearly to our economic future—and to our economic present. We need an alliance with China—and that should be the number one

priority of US foreign policy, not the war in Afghanistan or confronting Iran or North Korea. Public opinion is in our favor. There is a climate majority. Nearly 75% of Americans tell pollsters that they believe the earth's temperature is warming and that human behavior is responsible. Solid majorities think the nation needs a fundamental overhaul of its energy policies and expect oil to be replaced as a major source of fuel with 25 years. Yet, our political system seems unable to act and our president unable to lead.

Is Obama a lost cause for progressives and environmentalists? I would say not. It's likely that he will get reelected in 2012, almost whatever the outcome of the fall midterms. He is a good campaigner, and the Republicans do not have a viable national candidate or a message that is not simply negative and backward looking. After re-election, Obama could bring on board a more progressive and tougher economic team. More environmental bad stuff will likely happen on his watch and give him another opportunity to pass climate-change legislation and take the lead on green issues. He certainly understands what is at stake; whether he can act on it as a leader is unclear.

I am willing to give hope a chance—and Obama too—for awhile longer.

Bridging the Enthusiasm Gap: Obama and the Conventional Wisdom

October 18, 2010—Huffington Post

The profile of Barack Obama by Peter Baker in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine (“The Education of A President”) has a “woe is me” tone. Obama and his White House team seem a little too sorry for themselves and lack genuine self-analysis of the president’s political problems. The crazy Tea Party folks hate him, the Republicans in Congress don’t appreciate his efforts at bi-partisanship, and liberal Democrats are too demanding, too unrealistic about what can actually get done in Washington. No one appreciates his accomplishments. There is an absence of serious political analysis as to why his base is shaky or how his opponents got the upper hand—especially message-wise. After the mid-term, Obama needs to push his own re-start button; but it will only work if he gains a clearer understanding of what needs to be done to recharge his presidency and provide stronger political leadership for the country.

President Obama and the Democratic Party are headed for significant political losses in the November mid-term elections—and, no surprise, the conventional political wisdom is already being offered up as the answer to Obama’s weakened position. Columnists, pundits, and party elder statesmen are telling him that he tried to do too much in the first two years, that he was too liberal in his policy advocacy, and that he alienated the business community. The remedy: govern from the center, try even harder to be bi-partisan, and stop criticizing Wall Street and bring some CEOs onto the White House team. Obama should think small and tactical—and take a page from Bill Clinton’s triangulation playbook which he followed after his mid-term defeats.

Such tactics might work to get Obama reelected in 2012—as it did Clinton—but it will not allow Obama to govern successfully. He will accomplish little in the rest of his first term or in a second term, because he will be on the defensive most of the time. His base will get increasingly discouraged (as many of them are now), and he will end up alone in the White House with few genuine allies and no real accomplishments. A fired up and even more hostile right wing Republican Party will pursue him relentlessly and oppose him at every turn. If anyone doubts this, just watch what the Republicans do with the committees of the House, should they, as is likely, regain majority control in a few weeks. They are already preparing an onslaught of investigations and legislation to repeal or gut the major legislation that Obama has thus far managed to pass.

For Obama, it is not a matter of thinking big or thinking small; it is a matter of thinking smarter and more strategically. He needs to look for the Unconventional Wisdom that is being offered up by progressive thinkers and activists—and he needs to bring in fresh, tougher and smarter personnel to his White House team, both for the 2012 election, and for governing after he wins reelection.

Here are a few modest proposals from outside the Beltway for him to ponder as he crisscrosses the country in the final days of the fall campaign:

INEQUALITY AND AN ECONOMIC BILL OF RIGHTS

Economic inequality in the US is now at the same level as during the 1920s. Coupled with increasing economic insecurity that most

Americans are experiencing, it is a potent issue which Obama can address and use to his political advantage. Before the end of the year, Obama could announce a Presidential Commission on Economic Inequality—its causes and possible remedies, and appoint a well known and intellectually strong chairman such as former Labor Secretary Robert Reich who has been teaching a course on economic inequality at UC Berkeley's Public Policy School and written a new book on the subject (*After-Shock: The New Economy and America's Future*) or Georgetown law professor Peter Edelman, former policy adviser to Robert Kennedy, and one of the country's experts on the poor and disadvantaged. Progressive economists like Robert Frank (see his article, "Income Inequality: Too Big to Ignore," *New York Times*) Joe Stiglitz or James Galbraith could be appointed to the commission, along with noted populist politicians such as retiring Senator Byron Dorgan. Charge the commission with holding public hearings on the fact of economic inequality, its effect on the country, and the reasons for it, and have a report delivered by the end of 2011 to provide ammunition for the 2012 election and policy ideas for after.

Soon after the New Year, perhaps as part of the State of the Union, Obama should announce that he favors an end to affirmative action as we know it. Instead of race based affirmative action, he is throwing the support of his administration behind the idea of economic-based affirmative action—and he might include his support for proposals that illustrate this new approach such as universal school vouchers based on family income (which Reich advocates in his book). In addition, he might recall FDR's famous Economic Bill of Rights speech and announce his own version for the 21st century as part of his campaign platform. It could include a significant initiative for workers by making

economic rights in the workplace a civil right under law as proposed by labor lawyer Tom Geoghegan in "Ten Things Dems Could Do to Win" in *The Nation*. Let workers as individuals have stronger legal rights rather trying to argue about labor law reform and the state of existing unions.

Of course, part and parcel of these initiatives is the necessity of bringing more deft and tougher communications advisers into the White House and hiring speech writers of the ilk of David Kusnet (author of the still relevant book *Speaking American*) whom I hired for Clinton's 1992 campaign, and who wrote some of Clinton's best and most effective speeches. Obama has to be willing to talk about economic inequality and why the working and middle classes are so stressed—and offer plausible and politically tough remedies. Simply getting the economy going again will not address the issue.

GREEN INITIATIVES

Obama is not going to get any kind of climate change or major environmental legislation through Congress in the next two years—but he can begin to talk more effectively about what is needed—and he can take executive steps to illustrate his commitment and excite his base. For example, the Energy Department's plan for Energy Innovation Hubs (see Tom Friedman's column, "Build 'Em and They'll Come") is called by Secretary Chu "a series of mini-Manhattan projects." Not good labeling. President Obama should present the idea in his next State of the Union as The Green NASA, and set out clear and easily understandable commitments: "By 2015, all of the vehicles in the Federal government's service will be electric..." etc. He should also make highly visible green initiatives by executive order such as announcing that all US ambassadors will only drive in electric or

hybrid cars, and that the US Postal Service is “going green” (as proposed by Postal Rate Commissioner Ruth Goldway), converting its fleet of vehicles to alternative fuels. If he is really brave, he might state categorically that the US needs a significant tax on gasoline, and if the Congress will pass one, the revenue will be used to fund the Green NASA project, and also return dividends in the form of state and local green initiative grants.

Even some conservative think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute support increased federal spending on clean energy. As David Leonhardt described in his business column “Next Step on Policy for Climate” in the *New York Times*, AEI has teamed up with the centrist Brookings Institution to propose \$25 billion a year in new federal investment. Al Gore and other progressives have floated similar proposals. Of course, they make sense, and while not a substitute for tougher action on climate change (like a tax on carbon), they are a step in the right direction. Technical innovation is part of the answer to the problem of global warming—and politically, it is an issue that Obama can use to outflank know-nothing Republicans who deny that climate change is a problem. It also plays to bi-partisan concerns of China taking over the world market for clean green technology—and will appeal to some centrist voters.

LATINOS AND IMMIGRATION

In the first months of the Bush administration, the foreign minister of Mexico, Jorge Castaneda, brought a proposal across the border from President Vicente Fox that he called the Whole Enchilada. It was a comprehensive package that offered cooperative and cross border approaches to immigration, drugs, and economic development—but after 9/11 and Mexico’s unwillingness to support Bush’s invasion of Iraq, the initiative was dead in the water (see

Castaneda’s book, *Ex Mex: From Migrants to Immigrants*, for a discussion of the proposal and what happened to it, as well as an analysis of the most difficult issues between the two countries).

Immigration, drugs, and economic development have not gone away as issues in either country. Tackling any one of them is almost impossible for Obama in the next two years. However, the Republican Party’s approach to immigration has proved a political boon to Obama and the Democrats and it appears that Latino voters, if they are gotten to the polls in decent numbers, can play a vital role in key Senate, House and state races.

Obama could sustain and excite his Latino base by including in the State of the Union a proposal to restart comprehensive talks with Mexico along the lines of Castaneda’s proposal—and he could challenge Republicans to face up to these issues with more than negativity and militarism. Obama will never pass an immigration reform bill unless it is part of the Whole Enchilada. He could set the stage for it as a priority in the second term by speaking about it now and also assure excitement in the Latino community for his reelection.

NATION-BUILDING AT HOME

As Bob Woodward reports in his current best seller *Obama’s Wars*, the president is not in Afghanistan to nation build. At least, Obama seems to understand the futility of that project. Whether or not he holds to his surge and exit strategy by really starting the exit and coupling it with aggressive and smart diplomacy in Afghanistan and the region is uncertain. The good news for him is that the American public doesn’t care, at least for now, about the war in Afghanistan—and only will care if casualties rise too high. However,

there is strong sentiment that he should be spending more of his time rebuilding Cleveland or Detroit rather than Kabul. Unfortunately, the White House design of the economic stimulus package and its messaging of it was dismal; consequently, he got little credit and much abuse for it. Saying, as he and his team does, that things would have been worse economically without it is true but weak and rather pathetic. He needs projects and initiatives (a "Rebuild America" Infrastructure Bank for example) and he needs to brand them with his vision of 21st century America.

As part of a greater focus on American society and as part of a smart political strategy, Obama needs to talk about his version of Reagan's City on the Hill—of how he sees American society as serving as a model to be emulated, not one to be imposed on other countries by force of arms—even if they are weak or failed states. He can also talk about strengthening American democracy—and in particular, citizen participation in elections and in communities (he can praise the Tea Party for their civic participation, even if much of it is funded by big corporations and right wing individuals). He should challenge his opponents to make good on their own rhetoric by calling for legislation to make the next national election a federal holiday—Celebrate American Democracy Day. Making national elections a holiday will make it much easier for working class Americans to vote—and help him to get out the Democratic base.

DON'T WHINE, ORGANIZE

Obama and his White House team should stop complaining about their progressive critics, most of whom still hope for the best from Obama. Yes, there are those who are convinced by books like Tariq Ali's *The Obama Syndrome: Surrender at Home, War*

Abroad or Roger Hodge's *The Mendacity of Hope: Barack Obama and the Betrayal of American Liberalism*, and have given up on Obama. I believe that most of those who voted for Obama and worked for his campaign are not ready to bail yet. They are looking for signs that he is willing to fight the good fight and to do it better. Taking the actions described above would certainly help convince progressive activists that Obama is learning from his political mistakes. One important step he could take as he prepares for reelection is to announce that this time his grass roots campaign organization will become an independent organization after 2012, and not be kept under the Democratic National Committee (and under strict White House discipline). He should promise that it will be turned over to someone like Marshall Ganz to run as an organization which will push for progressive change based on grass roots activism not inside the Beltway lobbying and maneuvering.

Not doing this in his first term has proved to be a big mistake; hopefully, he can learn from it (see the discussion in Ari Berman's well reported book, *Herding Democrats: The Fight To Rebuild The Democratic Party and Reshape American Politics*). He needs both an aggressive outside strategy as well as a tougher and more deft inside strategy if he is going to rescue his Presidency.

In politics as in sports (and life too), it's not over until it's over. I don't want to count Obama out yet. Bill Clinton rebounded from a terrible first two years and won reelection handily, and was poised to be a better second term President (but he ruined it himself with the Lewinsky affair). Obama can learn from his own experience, find a stronger economic message and a clearer and more compelling American narrative—and he can revamp his White House team. It's not rocket science. The people and the strategic

elements exist for him to choose a path to victory in 2012 that will position him and the Democratic Party to make significant change in his second term.

We will get some indication of his choice—either the Conventional Wisdom or the Unconventional Wisdom—by how he reacts to the mid-term elections, whom he brings in to replace his departing economic team, and what message he offers the nation early next year in the State of the Union.

Winter of Discontent: Can Obama Get His Groove Back?

December 5, 2010—Huffington Post

President Obama needs more economic and political soul, if he is to get his groove back.

It's early December, and it's already cold out there. The political atmosphere in Washington, DC is decidedly chilly for progressives, and the compromises coming from the lame duck session of Congress won't be pretty.

After Congress goes home, we might want to use the holiday season and gifting to put politics in perspective—and to nudge President Obama back on to a more assertive and less defensive track. Certainly, after his political "shellacking" in the mid-terms, the WikiLeaks documents revealing the inner workings of his foreign policy, and the necessity of meeting with Republican leaders who detest him, the President and his family need a lot of Christmas cheer.

In my gifting article of last year ("Joy to the World: Good-Bye Bing Crosby, Hello Bob Dylan," Huffington Post, December 4, 2010), I recommended playing Bob Dylan's CD "Christmas In The Heart" at the Obamas' holiday parties. I don't know if the President followed my advice, but he did invite Dylan to sing at the White House earlier this year, and according to his interview in *Rolling Stone*, he enjoyed the encounter. His staff might want to give him the new book, *Dylan In America*, by Princeton historian Sean Wilentz which chronicles Dylan's influence on American culture. It's a suitable gift for an intellectual President and might get his mind off his current problems for a few hours.

As for Christmas music, this year requires a heftier spirit—and nothing is better than soul man James Brown. We are already playing

"The Complete James Brown Christmas CD" at our house. I once greeted the man himself at a summer music festival in Finland while serving as US ambassador. While I stood on the running board of his white Rolls Royce, Brown gave me religious advice for his fellow Baptist, Bill Clinton. I didn't file a cable on the conversation, so you won't find it in the WikiLeaks files. With Brown a few years gone, President Obama can't have a similar meeting or invite Brown to the White House, but he can listen to his restorative singing. Soul music is always good for the soul.

Yale economist Ray Fair has already sent a Christmas card to President Obama. An expert on econometrics and the relationship of economics to politics (shorthand equation: "It's the economy, stupid"), Fair predicts that Obama is likely to win the 2012 election in a landslide (see "A 2012 Forecast That Obama Can Love," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2010). Fair points out that giving in to Republicans on extending the Bush tax cuts, even for the super wealthy, can act as an economic stimulant and work to Obama's political advantage. The lagged effect of unspent stimulus money and the Fed's expansive monetary policy will also give a fiscal boost to the economy. Economics, of course, is not political science—or even science—but Fair's message can't help but raise spirits a bit in the Obama White House, especially with the lousy unemployment figures just released. Other economists like Jeff Madrick writing in the Huffington Post—"Obama Needs Wake-Up Call on Jobs Before 2012," November 23, 2010)—are less sanguine. Madrick notes that in the post-WWII era, the unemployment rate has not been above 8 per cent in the fall of a

presidential election as it is predicted to be in 2012.

As I have argued (“Bridging The Enthusiasm Gap: Obama and the Conventional Wisdom,” October 16, 2010), simply getting re-elected while neglecting the Democratic party and its base won’t allow the President to regain his economic soul or assure him a place as a great let alone a good President. He needs to redefine the public debate about the economy, not just react to the Republicans’ regressive anti-government positions. He can’t simply gamble that the economy will improve marginally enough to win him the election.

The perfect Presidential gift—it might even be a re-gift—is: *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR’s Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More Than Ever*. As fate would have it, the author, Chicago law professor Cass Sunstein, already works in the Obama White House. He has a large office with a messy desk in the Old Executive Office Building, where he works on regulatory matters. Sunstein is one of the few original thinkers whom the President brought with him from Chicago.

Even if Obama has read the book once (it was a *Washington Post* Best Book of 2004), he needs to reread it now, and take it to heart. He should give copies to all of his economic and political team, and ask his speech writers to work up a message based on its philosophy for his State of the Union speech. The book takes as its starting point the 1944 State of the Union speech by FDR when he proposed a second bill of rights—an Economic Bill of Rights—as necessary to maintain political freedom. Sunstein argues that such economic rights, their codification in law, and implementation in programs and policies are vital to the domestic security of the nation. Sunstein would make a good

choice to head the National Economic Council, replacing the departing Larry Summers who liked to harass Sunstein on regulatory matters. The President would benefit from an innovative thinker like Sunstein in the job, rather than an emissary to the business community.

Obama needs to reclaim FDR’s legacy and channel not only his political vision, but also FDR’s political craftiness and toughness in framing the economic debate for the next two years. He has to offer an economic message that will take the wind from the sails of the Republicans and rally his own troops for the battles ahead. Paul Krugman, Frank Rich and other liberal critics doubt that Obama is up to the task—but I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. Bill Clinton stumbled in his first term in ways worse than Obama, made a comeback and is now lionized as a political icon. We should give Obama the same chance to redeem himself and rescue his Presidency.

The perfect Xmas gift for Michelle Obama—and also for her to give to her own Christmas list—is the wonderful book, *Growing Roots: The New Generation of Sustainable Farmers, Cooks, and Food Activists*, written by Katherine Leiner and photographed by Andrew Lipton. The pair made a Studs Terkel-like trek around America, interviewing and profiling young farmers, entrepreneurs, and activists who are trying to change the way we think about food—the way we eat, and the way food is produced. The book is filled with examples of individuals whom Michelle should invite to future White House events, and products that she should serve at White House dinners. My favorite is the flavor Madagascar Vanilla made by Three Twins company of Petaluma, California, the largest producer of organic ice cream in the country. It is the perfect topping for holiday pies.

Last week, Congress passed a serious child nutrition bill that expands the school lunch program and sets new standards to add more fruits and vegetables to school meals. Michelle lobbied for the groundbreaking legislation which will soon be signed by the President. Food safety, food justice and other food related issues are part of a progressive agenda which President Obama can embrace and brand as his as well as Michelle's.

Here are some other gift suggestions, not only for the President and First Lady—but for all of us who are feeling a bit shaky, are concerned about the future of the country, and need our souls revived.

MUSIC FAVORITES

My musical tastes are rooted in the 60s, so I always ask my daughter Julie who is in the music business about new albums. Her good advice is simply to go to the NPR music page (www.npr.org/music/) and peruse their list of Top 50 Albums of the Year.

However, this year a number of Oldies But Goodies have been released which I'm enjoying and want to recommend as personal favorites. "The Promise," a CD by Bruce Springsteen, features outtakes and remixes of his original album, "Darkness On the Edge of Town." The Boss is one of the authentic voices in rock music who can capture the anxiety of working class Americans in a song. Obama would do well to channel a little inner Springsteen too. In honor of John Lennon's 70th birthday, his widow Yoko Ono has overseen the release this year of twelve remastered Lennon albums such as "Imagine" and "Power to the People." Buy all 12 for someone you love. My daughter was invited by Yoko to join in the celebration of John's birthday in Iceland this fall. She came away moved and impressed by the enduring power of Lennon's music and his

message of peace and harmony. Neil Young, a living Oldie But Goodie, came out with a new album "Le Noise" which is wonderful, almost therapeutic—and my favorite rock gospel singer Mavis Staples has a new album, "You Are Not Alone." She sang the title song on stage at Jon Stewart's rally on the Washington Mall this fall and rocked the crowd.

For those who want to understand and experience how music both reflects and influences the politics of the nation, the ideal, super duper music gift of the year is "Next Stop Is Vietnam—The War on Records: 1961-2008," a boxed set of 13 CDs and a 300 page accompanying book. It is the perfect gift for almost any baby boomer and for our children who should know that the 60s were about more than peace and love. It's not cheap, but it is a gift that will keep on giving. A wealthy Obama supporter might give a copy to the President who too frequently likes to dismiss the passions of the baby boom generation (even though he is actually a part of it, although at the tail end).

An appropriate companion gift to the Vietnam music set is the anthology of Garry Trudeau's cartoons—40: *A Doonesbury Retrospective*. Critics have called the comic strip "one of the greatest pieces of serialized topical fiction ever produced by an American." I was present at the creation, and read Trudeau's early strips called "Bull Tales" which appeared in the *Yale Daily News* where he developed many of the characters—based on real life folks at Yale in the 60s—that became the staple of the Doonesbury series. Garry is the Charles Dickens of modern cartoonists and he should go on Obama's list as a future winner of a Kennedy Center award or even the President's Medal of Freedom.

As a serial book reader, raised by my mother to have a pile books by my bed waiting to be

read, I can't help but recommend some of my favorites of the past year.

NON-FICTION BOOKS

In the category of political economy, two books explain how we got into our current economic situation and why getting out is more than just a matter of reviving economic growth. In his book, *Capital Offense: How Washington's Wise Men Turned America's Future Over to Wall Street*, Michael Hirsh, national economics correspondent for *Newsweek*, provides in-depth reporting on how both Democrats and Republicans have been in bed with Wall Street financiers for decades and allowed the financial sector to become a casino operation rather than one which supports balanced economic growth. Two political scientists, Jacob Hacker of Yale and Paul Pierson of UC Berkeley, analyze the role that government policies have played over three decades in shifting the country from one of middle-class opportunity to one of super-rich privilege. The book, *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer—and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*, is a reality-based argument that is hard to dismiss. Both books, and their authors, should be consulted by the Obama White House about the scale of the reforms which are needed to make this a more secure and fairer middle-class nation. If you can't read an entire book on economics, then at least read John Cassidy's article, "What Good Is Wall Street?" in *The New Yorker*, November 29, 2010, and give a gift subscription to a loved one or a young friend. The magazine publishes the best in-depth reporting on politics and economics available in print or on line.

On foreign policy, one could simply read the extensive reporting at home and abroad based on the WikiLeaks documents. However one feels about WikiLeaks and its odd

founder Julian Assange (Congressman Ron Paul defends him), the source material opens a window on the conduct of US foreign policy.

If you can gift only one book about China, then my hands-down pick is, *Dreaming In Chinese: Mandarin Lessons in Life, Love and Language*, by Deborah Fallows, who along with her journalist husband Jim Fallows, spent three years living and reporting from The Peoples Republic. While Jim focused on economics and politics, Deb spent time learning the language, eating the food, and meeting the people, blogging on her experience to friends, and writing a wonderful and humane book. Her observations will wet almost anyone's appetite for learning more about the country. How the US responds to the reemergence of China—and how China handles its own rise again—are among the most vital questions of this century.

As the Wikileaks documents illustrate, the Obama administration has spent a great deal of diplomatic time and effort responding to Iran and its nuclear ambitions. It's useful to get some perspective on current events by reading good books on the country. One is *The Ayatollah's Democracy: An Iranian Challenge*, by Iranian journalist Hooman Majd, whose earlier book, *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ* is also worth owning. Because he speaks the language yet lives in New York and understands the US, Majd is as good a cross cultural interpreter as we are likely to find on Iran. Read his work to get an understanding of the complex nature of Iranian society and politics and why the current US approach is not likely to succeed at containing Iran or pushing it to regime change. A policy of genuine engagement might be called for—and former *New York Times* journalist Stephen Kinzer (whose book on earlier US-Iranian relations, *All the Shah's Men*, is a classic), offers an "out of the

beltway” strategy in his new book: *Reset: Iran, Turkey and America’s Future*. Kinzer argues that it is in the US national interest to find a way to work with Iran in the Middle East or at the very least, to normalize relations as the US did with Mao’s China. Iran and the US have much in common (and Iran’s young population admires a lot about America). In spite of the difficulties, the two countries need to find a way to work together on common problems in the region. Engagement is more than just a catch phrase; it requires diplomatic initiatives and a willingness to take political risks to change relationships.

Latin America is a neglected area of Obama foreign policy. The good news is that things are going okay for many countries south of our border (excepting Mexico)—at least the ones that have learned the lessons described in Sebastian Edwards’ new book: *Left Behind: Latin America and the False Promise of Populism*. A professor at UCLA’s Anderson School of Business, as well as a noted Chilean economist (and author of a best selling thriller in Spanish), Edwards explains clearly, without equations or complicated graphs, why many Latin American countries have failed to share in the growth of the global economy, and why the way forward is not that of Chavez’ Venezuela but of Lula’s Brazil. Edwards argues convincingly that it is social democratic government and policies, not left wing populism or right wing populism, which produces improved economic outcomes. It’s a message that is relevant to the US and Europe as well as to Latin America.

If you want a gift book which ties the world together in a brilliant intellectual framework, then your best choice is the new global history, *Why The West Rules—For Now: The Patterns of History and What They Reveal about the Future*. The author is Ian Morris, a professor of classics and history at Stanford, a

highly learned and eclectic thinker who is also a fluid and amusing writer. Any author who can quote both Aristotle and Asimov is a man after my own intellect. Few historians can make use of science fiction references without sounding silly; Morris succeeds with his discussion of Isaac Asimov’s classic Foundation series. One of the many important points that Morris makes is that in the 21st Century, perhaps more than any time in human history, the role of political leadership has taken on heightened importance. Individuals can make a significant difference, and are not simply buffeted by economic and social forces. President Obama should take note. It matters a great deal if he can get his groove back and regain control of the national agenda.

FICTION

I took World Literature at Culver City High School, had a great teacher, and consequently read most of the classic authors like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Cervantes. In American literature and US history classes, we read Mark Twain, Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. I’ve also had my J.D. Salinger and John Updike periods. So, been there, done that, and I feel no guilt now with my choice of light fiction. I like detective and thriller novels with interesting settings where one can learn something new about a topic or a foreign society while enjoying the story line and the writing. A few of my favorites from 2010:

Nineteenth Street NW—a tale of financial markets and terrorism by Rex Ghosh, an international economist who knows how the International Monetary Fund and world currency markets operate. You get a quick course in global economics and a compelling story of justice and neglected nations.

The Dervish House—by Ian McDonald, a future history set in Istanbul which projects technological and political possibilities in Turkey a few decades from now and weaves them into a well crafted and superbly written thriller.

Where The Shadows Lie—by Michael Ridpath, and *Operation Napoleon* by Arnaldur Indridson, are both set in Iceland. One involves the ancient past and the other recent political events and the angst that a small country feels about its place in the global system.

The Broken Shore—and the sequel, *Truth*, by Peter Temple, one of the best Australian writers of crime noir, and *The Old School*, by P.M. Newton, a first novel by a rising star about a woman detective in New South Wales, provide hours of enjoyment.

Between Summer's Longing and Winter's End—by Leif GW Persson, the latest entry in the Nordic thriller sweepstakes as to who will follow in the footsteps of Stieg Larsson and his phenomenally successful Millennium series. The author knows the ins and outs of the Swedish police and security services from first hand experience, and lends authenticity to his well conceived and well executed plot.

The Stone Cutter—the first in a new series by Camilla Lackberg, another up and coming Swedish author. Her police novels are set in Fjällbacka, a resort town on the southern coast of Sweden—an actual place where Ingrid Bergman and her Swedish husband spent their summers on an island home. The main square is named after Ingrid Bergman and local shops like the bakery where she brought bread and pastries figure in the series. A notable feature of the novel is the historical back story about Sweden's past.

DVDs

You can't read all the time, and we certainly don't in our house. Some nights will find us relaxing on the couch, surrounded by two dogs and a cat in various positions of recline, watching a movie or documentary on our flat screen television. We are fans of HBO series like *Broadway Empire* and Showtime's *Dexter*, but most network TV leaves us cold. We prefer foreign imports. A few of our favorites of the past year:

Underbelly: A Tale of Two Cities, and *Underbelly: The Golden Mile*—a controversial Australian series in two parts about the drug wars of the 90s in Melbourne and Sydney. An Aussie version, so to speak, of HBO's *The Wire*. A good anecdote to halcyon images of life Down Under.

The Killing—a superb, highly nuanced Danish series set in Copenhagen involving police, politicians and low lifes, provided one of the best viewing experiences of the year. Somewhat lighter Danish fare, *Ana Pihl* (1 and 2), depicts the life of a single Copenhagen police woman with a small boy and a former cop father who attracts a twenty something girl friend and decides to write his memoirs. Both are available from Readings book store or Dymonks in Australia by mail, or from Amazon or Amazon UK— and you need an all region DVD player to view them.

The Two Escobars—a true tale of soccer, politics and gangsterism, linking the lives of Colombian international soccer star Andres Escobar and Pablo Escobar, leader of the Medellin narco cartel. It is one of the best soccer documentaries ever, made by two brothers, Jeff and Michael Zimbalist (sons of Andrew Zimbalist, the leading sports economist in the US).

Inside Job—this award winning documentary is a visual companion to the books by Hirsch and Hacker. Filmmaker Charles Ferguson tells the story of the financial crisis and explains its root causes, as well as highlighting much needed reforms. It should be screened at the White House for Congressional leaders from both parties.

YES WE CAN

The joy of grandparenting is that you get to buy gifts for your grand kids, as well as take them out for ice cream or cupcakes. Our granddaughter Jasmine, age 5, is a princess and an artist (in spite of her Dad's desire that she become a world class athlete), so she loves Disney movies, and small items like the colorful rubber bracelets and hair bands which seem to be the fad among her peers. Our three year old grandson Viggo is into construction equipment, as well as airplanes. His favorite DVDs are the *Bob The Builder* series, originally from England, as well as the BBC's *Planet Earth* series (he likes sharks a lot). The theme song from *Bob the Builder* is often playing in our house, and the refrain goes: "Can We Build It? Yes, We Can!" Bob, his partner Wendy, and his crew of talking machines tackle every obstacle with determination and optimism. We should all strive to do likewise, even in a winter of discontent.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year,

The Ambassadude

Obama and Rising Powers: Foreign Policy in Tough Economic Times

June 30, 2011—Huffington Post

Does Obama have a coherent foreign policy—and does it matter?

Tufts professor Daniel Drezner discusses these questions in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* and answers in the affirmative. Drezner, who is well known for his witty treatise on Zombie theories of international relations, argues that a combination of re-engagement with allies and aggressive counter punching against adversaries comprises the Obama doctrine—but that the Obama White House has failed to explain this strategy well at home or abroad. “Until the Obama administration does a better job of explaining its grand strategy to the American people,” he concludes, “it will encounter significant domestic resistance to its policies.” Whether this conclusion is true, I will address below when I talk about the 2012 elections.

Discerning a coherent US foreign policy is not just the province of policy wonks and professors. For years, I have challenged my undergraduates at Occidental College (where Obama studied), to examine critically America’s role in the post-9/11 world. In May 2008, Oxy diplomacy students produced the report, “Rebranding America,” which analyzed the decline in America’s standing in the world during the Bush administration and offered a host of recommendations to the next President for restoring our reputation and standing among nations. Copies were provided to Obama’s transition team and to Secretary Clinton’s staff at the State Department.

In December, 2009, as Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in Oslo, my students released another report, (“Obama’s First Year: A Nobel Effort,” discussed in the Huffington

Post, December 10, 2009), which examined what he had promised to do in foreign policy during the campaign and whether he had made good on these promises in his first year as president.

This spring, students produced the latest report, “Obama and the Rising Powers,” (available on the Oxy student-run website, OxyWorldwide.com). These students, mainly juniors and seniors majoring in Diplomacy and World Affairs, analyzed six countries: the so-called BRIC (the term was coined in 2001 by Jim O’Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, to call attention to the growing economic importance of Brazil, Russia, India and China), plus Turkey, a key player in the Middle East, which I added to the mix making them the BRICT nations. I challenged students to describe the strengths and weaknesses of these rising countries, to examine the enhanced role they are playing in the international arena, and to analyze how the US is responding to them as significant players on the global stage. Two of the countries, Russia and China, are our former adversaries from the Cold War. India was neutral, and Brazil was ruled by military dictatorships or authoritarian governments. Only Turkey as a member of NATO was viewed by the US as an ally. Now, all have taken on new roles as economic competitors and as rising regional powers with their own national outlooks and interests which frequently differ from ours.

The students began by reading books on whether or not the US is in decline, and how our position as the Lone Super Power after the Cold War has changed. The book which seemed to have the most influence was Harvard professor Joseph Nye’s, *The Future*

of Power. Students had the opportunity to meet Nye and hear him speak during an afternoon at my home. They agreed with his analysis that the US is not in absolute decline. We still have the largest economy and the strongest military of any nation. In terms of purchasing power per person, the US is far richer than any of the BRICT nations, and even if China or India's overall GDP surpasses that of the US, our country will still offer its citizens a greater standard of living. Of course, we have serious problems of inequality, unemployment, and illegal immigration—and there is a lack of agreement between the two major parties on the role which the government should play to address these and other domestic problems. America is not number one in many quality of life indicators. Compared to Canada, Australia or most Scandinavian countries, it is hardly an international role model for domestic tranquility and happiness.

My students also understand that the US cannot simply dictate outcomes in global affairs, nor can we afford to rebuild by ourselves every failed state or intervene in every trouble spot. We need partners to insure the stability of the global system—and the BRICT nations might offer new opportunities for such strategic partnerships.

In addition to Nye's book and other readings, I provided the students with briefings from experts who came to speak on campus. Journalist James Fallows reported on his three year stay in China and gave his views on the challenge of a rising China. Former US ambassador to Turkey, Mort Abramowitz, shared his views on Turkish foreign policy. Sergei Plekhanov, former adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev and now a professor at York University, gave a presentation on contemporary Russian foreign policy. Jeff Cason, a professor at Middlebury College and a leading expert on Brazil, explained the

factors in that country's recent rise. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Director of UCLA's Center for India and South Asia, analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian economy.

Organized in to country teams, the students examined the economy, the military, the government and civil society, and the foreign policy of each BRICT country, looked at strengths and weaknesses in each area, and then analyzed the opportunities and dangers for the US. At the end of each country section, students offered recommendations for President Obama in his future dealings with these rising powers.

One common theme in the country reports was energy policy. Students found that in every case there seemed to be an untapped potential for greater cooperation between the US and the BRICT for development and promotion of cleaner, renewable energy sources. In short, more creative and active environmental diplomacy is warranted. Students were ahead of former Vice President Gore and his recent article in *Rolling Stone* ("Climate of Denial," *Rolling Stone*, July 7-21, 2011), which calls for a clearer articulation by President Obama of what is at stake at home and abroad in the debate over climate change. In fact, going back to the first Oxy student report "Rebranding America," my students have been advocating a strategy of Green Diplomacy.

Another conclusion reached by the class was that while President Obama's emphasis on engagement as opposed to the unilateralism of George W. Bush has been effective in improving America's image abroad, it is not a strategy. My students would disagree with Professor Drezner about the existence of a clear Obama doctrine. They see it more as a set of pragmatic responses to world events. As journalist Ryan Lizza wrote in the *New Yorker*, May 2, 2011, Obama is a

“consequentialist” who improvises his foreign policy as much as he strategizes it. Obama and his foreign policy team try to balance realist and idealist approaches to foreign affairs by focusing on the consequences of their actions (not a bad thing, of course)—but they don’t seem to have a vision of what kind of outcomes they are seeking. My students argue for a more energetic and forward looking set of strategic objectives, and for a more aggressive and nuanced set of policies of strategic partnership with the BRIC countries.

A copy of the students’ report was sent to the White House care of a member of the National Security Council staff, Samantha Power, who was the commencement speaker this May at Occidental. Samantha gave a well received speech, mixing idealism and realism in her remarks, and adding a dash of humor to her five rules for living a meaningful life. One student asked me why President Obama had not appointed more thinkers and doers like her to his foreign policy team. A new foreign policy team and new foreign policy ideas will have to wait until after the 2012 election. The Obama White House is in re-election mode, and almost every action he takes at home and abroad will be calculated as to its effect on the 2012 campaign.

Foreign policy will not play much if any role in the presidential race. The American voting public is not very concerned with what is happening in most areas of the world. They are rightly concerned about the state of the American economy and the state of US society as they experience it in their daily lives. Of course, there is sometimes a connection between the what happens at home and what is happening abroad (especially with the amount of US tax payer dollars which is spent on foreign adventures or the size of US debt held by China), but most political leaders try to obfuscate the

connections. Perhaps that is changing. The debate within the Republican party on the cost of the US effort in Afghanistan is new and interesting. The fact that President Obama used the phrase “nation building at home” in his recent speech on the draw down of troops which I had promoted in the Huffington Post last fall is mildly encouraging.

It remains to be seen if President Obama and his White House political team can craft a coherent narrative and a strong political message on economic policy, let alone on foreign policy. He certainly needs to do better job at explaining economic policy if he is to be re-elected.

The White House seems to think it is sufficient that Obama be cast as ‘the responsible adult’—and that he will be lucky, as he has been in the past, with the quality of his opponent. That’s a risky strategy when the economy remains the single most important issue in the upcoming campaign. Whomever they select as standard bearer, the Republicans will try to recreate the success of Margaret Thatcher when she artfully blamed the economic troubles of England on the Labour Party and ousted them from power. For this reason alone, Obama needs a tougher and clearer economic message. There is ample material for him to use. One hopes that he and his team have at least read the recent articles from his local paper *The Washington Post*. A special report on Breakaway Wealth by reporter Peter Whoriskey, provides irrefutable evidence on the growing inequality in the US and highlights a basic cause: the skyrocketing pay of American executives. On June 24, *Post* reporter Neil Irwin, wrote, “Five Economic Lessons From Sweden, the Rock Star of Recovery,” which makes clear that even in a country currently run by a centrist party, the role of government in stabilizing, regulating

and guiding the economy is essential for economic growth and fair outcomes.

I won't belabor the point which I have made frequently in the Huffington Post since Obama was elected. It's not just the economy, stupid—but how you talk about it that matters in politics.

I don't expect the Obama White House or his re-election team to get religion on the economy. A more likely scenario is that political reality might force a change in the re-election team. Many of my East Coast journalist friends believe that if the polls look bad or even iffy for Obama a year from now, he won't hesitate to trade Biden for Hillary. The Big Switch would be made sending Joe to State and making Mrs. Clinton the VP candidate. Such a move would energize his campaign, especially among women, and among Latinos and working class whites. The populist Big Dog, Bill Clinton would stump tirelessly for the ticket, and the combination could deliver a larger victory for Obama and the Democrats than he might win otherwise, giving him new political running room to govern in his second term. I am not a Clinton loyalist who is floating this at the behest of Bill or Hillary or any of their political pals. I am skeptical that Obama would make the move even if it were to be in his best interest, but my journalist sources have convinced me that it is within the realm of possibility. The Clintons understand economic messaging, whatever their other flaws. An Obama/Clinton ticket is probably the only path to progressive change in the second term.

The June gloom is lifting in Los Angeles. The sun is shining in my hometown; we are cooking outside and eating in the garden with family and friends. I've put down my economic and foreign policy books and picked up detective fiction. I give high marks to Sara Gran's *Claire Dewitt and the City of*

the Dead, a quirky novel about the world's greatest PI. A one-time teen detective in Brooklyn and follower of the enigmatic French detective Jacques Silette, Clair takes her game to post-Katrina New Orleans. Read the book, the first in a new series, and watch re-runs of HBO's *Treme* for musical accompaniment. We've also seen the most popular film of the year from Norway, *Troll Hunter*, and I've finished the superb detective series written by Jo Nesbo set in Oslo.

My advice for a happy summer: ignore the debt ceiling debate and recharge your batteries for fall. Wait for economic reality to bring Hillary on to the Democratic ticket, and have a good 4th of July.

Thinking About Obama: How to Support the President in 2012

September 12, 2011—*Huffington Post*

“How should we think about Obama?”

My friend and former State Senator, Sheila Kuehl likes to get right to the serious stuff.

I recently had a catch-up lunch with Sheila, a fourteen-year veteran of the California legislature (she left because of term limits), author of over 170 bills, including paid family leave and other progressive measures, and one of the most effective Democrats to serve in elected office—a person who cares deeply about policy and who understands practical politics. Like me and many other progressive Democrats, she has been disappointed in President Obama’s performance in office, but she is not ready to give up on him.

“Remember the great spirit of Camp Obamas which energized so many people,” Sheila recalled as we ate outside in the garden. “Can we get that back or are people too disillusioned?”

A lot of Obama supporters, young and old, are disappointed in him—above all, with his vacillating leadership and inability to stand up against the Republican attack on government and offer a strong counter-narrative. I hear these sentiments from many of my students, as well as from long time friends like Sheila. A number of progressives have been harshly critical of Obama’s political leadership including many authors on the *Huffington Post*, and not without reason. Others, turned off by the political wrangling and partisan gridlock in Washington, DC., blame money politics more than Obama’s failings as a leader, and want to find ways to change the political system.

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz has called for a moratorium on political donations until the politicians stop bickering and start acting like grown-ups. *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman and Johns Hopkins political scientist Michael Mandelbaum argue in their new book, *That Used To Be US: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*, that the only hope to move forward a public agenda of reform and renewal is for a third party candidate to run in 2012 representing what they call “the radical center.”

The ‘nation-building at home’ reforms they favor—greater public investment in infrastructure, a serious response to global warming through promotion of renewable resources, educational reform focused on science and math, and greater attention to growing economic inequality—are desirable and ones most Democrats support, but their political strategy of a third party candidate is wrongheaded. (For detailed historical arguments see my article in *The Nation*, “Citizens’ Party: Wrong Time, Wrong Race, May 10, 1980, or simply remember how Ralph Nader’s campaign in 2000 helped to elect George Bush.) Their book is well meant and contains numerous stories of laudable individuals working for serious change in America, but as David Frum notes in the *New York Times Book Review* (September 12, 2011) it is an elitist approach, built on the hope that reasonable men might stand up and bring us together in a Grand Bargain for reform.

Politics is about a clash of interests as well as of ideas. It is almost never a rational discussion of overarching national interest. It is about people who are passionate, and who

care enough to raise money, walk precincts, make phone calls, and reach out to neighbors about candidates who they feel represent them and their interests. Many Tea Party supporters are passionate about politics, however wrongheaded we might think their public agenda or how reactionary their vision of America. As many commentators have noted, Obama's seeming lack of passion is a political minus, not an admirable trait. Parties also have a class and social basis. It can't escape notice that the Republican Party has replaced the Democrats in most Southern States, and has a largely white, and relatively upper income base. Democrats are more diverse, people of color, working class, and lower income. Parties reflect and represent these interests and world views.

Sheila Kuehl understands the nature and calling of the political life. A Harvard trained lawyer and the first openly gay person elected to the California legislature, she brought passion to her office, and then focused that passion to achieve practical legislative measures that benefited both her constituents and all California women, children and working families. Because I respect Sheila as well as like her personally, I took seriously her question at lunch: how should we think about Obama—and what should we do in 2012?

Of course, we should support him in his reelection—but we should do it strategically by arguing for conditions which will make his reelection more than a personal victory. 2012 should be about much more than giving Barack Obama his second term. Here's my guide for the politically dissatisfied:

1. We need a Vice President who can succeed Obama after his second term—and it's not Joe Biden. He would make an excellent Secretary of State, but he is not a strong presidential candidate for 2016.

He needs to be traded for someone who can compete seriously for the presidency after Obama.

One of Bill Clinton's best decisions was to select a contemporary as his running mate. We won't revisit the reasons why Al Gore didn't become president, but he was a good if imperfect candidate whom Clinton set up to run after him and carry on his work. As the initiator and co-author of the 1992 campaign program, "Putting People First," I used to say that was an agenda for eight years of Clinton and then eight years of Gore. The world would be a much better place if that had come to pass.

Supporters of Obama should tell him that he needs to trade in Biden by making him Secretary of State, and replacing him with Hillary Clinton—my first choice—or if not Hillary, then a contemporary such as Congressman Xavier Becerra. Moving Biden to State and making Hillary VP would bring needed excitement to the campaign, help Obama win back the enthusiasm of the Democratic base, and assure that a strong candidate would run in 2016 as his successor. Similarly, picking Xavier Becerra, the respected and progressive Congressman from Los Angeles, son of working-class immigrants, a graduate of Stanford and Stanford Law whom the leadership has appointed to the Joint Select Deficit Reduction Committee, would give the party its first Latino nominee, and offset the appeal of Florida Senator Marco Rubio, should he be selected for the VP spot on the Republican ticket (as seems highly likely).

We can argue about who Obama should pick, but he shouldn't keep Biden on the ticket—not if we want to win again in 2016. A political movement should be

about more than the candidate of the moment.

2. Revive the spirit and organization of the 2008 campaign including the Camp Obamas, but this time, keep the grassroots organization in tack and separate from the White House after the election.

As Marshall Ganz, one of the key Obama organizers in his election campaign, has pointed out, a key mistake was to fold the more than 10 million Obama activists from the campaign into the White House political organization and the DNC. Instead, they should have been mobilized through a separate non-profit run by Ganz and other progressives. Leaders in MoveOn, labor unions, women's organizations, gay rights groups, and others who will be asked to get out their members for Obama in 2012 should ask in return that he promise to keep the grassroots campaign organization active (and separate from the White House) after he wins. Donors who fund many of the progressive organizations that supported Obama in the past and will likely do so in 2012 (no one wants to have a right wing Republican in power again in the White House) should make this reasonable demand a condition of their active support for Obama's reelection.

3. Keep pressuring Obama to stay with the fighting message of his American Jobs Speech.

Regardless of how the actual bill is handled in Congress, the message of the speech—that government has a positive role to play in the lives of all Americans should be repeated over and over as the narrative of the 2012 campaign. In addition, those who are fortunate and

wealthy in our society, owe it to the country to pay their fair share in taxes, and to give everyone a chance at making a better life.

If Obama starts to stray back into meaningless bipartisan rhetoric, he should be publicly pressured by his supporters again and again to stay on message. Reagan was a master at repeating his anti-government message over and over—and usually with a smile. Obama should learn the lesson. Show passion and stand firm with your narrative.

4. Plan to expand the electorate and fight for everyone's right to vote.

As journalist Ari Berman describes in *Rolling Stone* ("The GOP War on Voting," September 15, 2011), it is part of the strategy of the Republican Party to scare away Democratic voters from the polls—in particular, voters of color—using intimidating techniques under the guise of combating so-called "voter fraud." The Obama administration needs to take aggressive steps to counter these actions, including having President Obama call it by its proper name: intimidation.

In addition, Obama should be asked by supporters to introduce legislation making election day a national holiday and same day registration the law of the land. The point is to make it easier not harder for the almost half Americans of voting age who don't vote, even in presidential elections, to go to the polls.

The composition of the electorate is a key factor in achieving progressive change. I learned this more than a quarter century ago, when we made electoral reform a key issue in local Santa Monica politics.

For decades, municipal elections were held in April (a week after city elections in neighboring Los Angeles), and turnout was always low. Those who voted were mainly better off, conservative homeowners, while Democratic renters didn't bother to show up at the polls.

Our center-left political coalition not only ran candidates for city council on a progressive urban platform which included a package of renters' rights; we also fought for and won moving the city's election day to November in the same years as state and national elections. Turnout soared and has stayed high ever since. Partly as a result of that reform, Santa Monica progressives have controlled the city council for something like 28 of the last 30 years, and used government to make Santa Monica a model of urban policies, including the first urban farmers market in the state, the first city-run curbside recycling, bike paths, non-profit community housing, the strongest renters rights law in the nation, and other measures widely copied by cities in California and the nation.

As I have written in the Huffington Post ("Change That Really Matters," January 9, 2008), greater voter participation in a country is highly correlated with policies which benefit working families and produce more equitable economic and social outcomes. Activists should demand that the Democratic Party and its candidates stand for democracy with a small d by expanding the electoral base.

5. Plan and fight for a more progressive transition and more progressives in Obama's second term government.

The constituent groups which comprise the base of the Democratic party and

which Obama must rely upon to supply the foot soldiers for his reelection—labor, women, environmentalists, gay rights activists, Latino and black organizers, student groups, etc.,—should plan for winning, and talk during the campaign about the necessity for more progressive appointments in Obama's second term—fighting liberals like Sheila Khuel or Elizabeth Warren (a missed opportunity).

At the very least, Obama supporters should pressure him to appoint smart and tough progressive economic thinkers to his White House team—respected liberal economists such as James Galbraith and Barry Bluestone who care about inequality and about working class families. The labor movement especially has to be much tougher about insisting that pro-labor officials are appointed to key posts, not just at the Labor Department, but also on the Council of Economic Advisers, at The Treasury, the Office of the Trade Rep, the State Department, and elsewhere.

There are lots of good policy ideas (I've argued for many in past HP articles)—but it is vital to remember that people make policy, and if you don't have fighting liberals and progressives in key positions, then progressive policies won't get enacted. Of course, you also have to win elections.

I hope that I have been clear as well as true to Sheila's charge. Let's support Obama in 2012, but not uncritically; and start thinking beyond his second term before he wins one—and how to keep power after he leaves the scene.

It's also good to have a fallback position. As a Californian, mine is clear. If Rick Perry is elected president, then I will start a secession movement. We might even include the

coastal cities of Oregon and Washington and
call the new country Ecotopia.

Memo to Occupy! How to Keep the Movement Alive, Spread the Message and Change the World

October 12, 2011—Huffington Post

Two cheers for Occupy!

Abrazos from California to all those willing to take action and make a statement against the economic status quo and politics as usual. Your spirit and activism are cheering to those of us from the 60s generation who have not given up on reform in America.

You already have your critics from the right-wing Republican leadership to middle-of-the-road commentators like David Brooks. Ignore them. You are more important than you know. A few progressive critics have made an important point: activism without a vision or a program ultimately will die out or be disappointed. Economic inequality in the US is outrageous, and Wall Street interests do heavily influence both political parties—but being right about the situation does not mean that it will change. Your movement needs content—and it needs dialogue. Here are a few modest suggestions:

- Organize a national day of Popular Economics teach-ins, focused on economic inequality. Model it after Earth Day or the Vietnam Moratorium. Start on campuses, then take it to communities in civic centers, union halls, churches and schools. There are a number of progressive economists who would participate such as Joe Stiglitz and Paul Krugman (both Nobel Prize winning economists), James Galbraith, Barry Bluestone, Robert Reich, Martin Carnoy, Richard Parker, Richard Rothstein, Jeff Madrick—and smart political scientists and

journalists like Jacob Hacker, Michael Hirsh, John Judis, Caroline Heldman and Tom Edsall. They and many others would be happy to offer their analysis and expertise—and they all speak economics in English.

- Show the documentary *Inside Job* by Charles Ferguson. Put up screens in public parks and in front of city halls and have free showings of the film as part of your demonstrations. Make use of the film for Teach-In events in the spring as part of a public outreach strategy.
- Circulate and discuss the New America Foundation's report, *The Way Forward*, reported on in the *New York Times*, Oct. 11. This is a serious, progressive plan to move the economy out of the doldrums. It is one example of an intellectual rallying cry for your movement, and an answer to the question: what are you for?
- Give activists copies of what I call The Little White Book—the paperback *Mis-Measuring Our Lives—Why GDP Doesn't Add Up* by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, all world class economists, who explain why traditional economic statistics don't do justice to reality and what is important in our lives. Wave copies of the book in front of Congress and the Treasury in Washington, DC, to make the point that economics should put people's

lives at its foundation—and that there are practical ways to for the government to do that.

- Actively support candidates like Elizabeth Warren in Massachusetts and Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin who are running on economic reform platforms—and support Barack Obama, but with qualifications (as I outlined in my Huffington Post piece, “Thinking About Obama,” 9/12/11). And run your own candidates in state and local elections just as the Tea Party did. Many of the more liberal members of Congress got their start by running as anti-war candidates or pro-environment candidates in the 60s and 70s.
- Make allies of artists, musicians, comedians, and the clergy
- Already many of your Occupy sites have included improvised music and art. Reach out to more musicians and artists for songs and posters about economic inequality and justice and the power of Wall Street. Engage performers to put on local concerts. Ask local clergy to reflect on religion’s stance on economic inequality. Consider a nationally televised concert for Economic Equality on the Mall in Washington, DC. I’ll bet that you could persuade Lady Gaga (she has endorsed Obama) to appear with Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen. No doubt Jon Stewart would be happy to be MC.

If you extend the life of your movement by adding content and reaching out to more people through Teach-ins and other forms of public dialogue, you will have a dramatic effect on the issues debated in the 2012

Presidential election. You already have had an impact, adding spine to Democrats in Congress and pushing the White House in a more progressive direction. You could also energize Obama to become a truly progressive President in his second term—and you could build a movement which would live beyond and outside any one elected leader. At the very least, call on him now to appoint a Presidential commission on Inequality—its causes and solutions.

Feel free to check out copies of *Economic Democracy*, or *A New Social Contract*, books which I co-authored with Stanford economist Martin Carnoy, or even peruse the Clinton/Gore campaign platform, *Putting People First*, which I co-authored with Robert Reich and Ira Magaziner. You might find a few reform proposals which are still relevant.

It’s a Fall Offensive to make my heart sing.

Looking for a Lady Gaga Xmas and Finding Justin Bieber: What to Gift Obama and Occupy

December 8, 2011—Huffington Post

It's a disappointing year when Justin Bieber has a Christmas album called *Under The Mistletoe* and Lady Gaga has not yet done hers. What's a music loving family to do? The best I can suggest is Tony Bennett's, *The Classic Christmas Album*. Bennett deserves a shout-out for showing up at 80 plus. He has recorded a duet with Lady Gaga ("The Lady Is A Tramp") on *Duets II*, and also sung with Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, Aretha Franklin, Natalie Cole and the late Amy Winehouse. Tony Bennett is the Bill Clinton of pop singers—and he gives us all a little cheer for the holiday season.

It's disappointing that President Clinton has a bestselling book on the economy but hasn't called for a national teach-in and day of discussion on economic inequality. Lady Gaga, a young woman of talent, energy and social conscience, sang at Clinton's 65th birthday celebration at the Hollywood Bowl. I was hoping that the two of them might go on a national "Reclaim Our Economy" tour. Of course, I was also hoping that members of Occupy would follow a strategy of taking the message to the community as the second phase of the movement. Perhaps, it will happen in 2012. The origins of Occupy are interesting if odd (See "Pre-Occupied" in the *New Yorker* last month), and its trajectory is unclear.

It would be really disappointing if the energy and message of Occupy disappeared over the holiday season, and had little impact on the presidential race. There is no one to "gift" in the Occupy movement with advice or readings, since it has no leadership structure. At least it seems that Occupy has influenced President Obama. In a speech this

week in Republican Kansas, President Obama echoed the Occupy message that inequality "is the defining issue of our time." Occupy has given us all a gift by affecting the terms of public debate, as well as popular culture. The vivid imagery of the phrase, "We are the 99%," and the idea that there is an over-rewarded 1% are part of the lexicon now.

It's hard to know what to give the President for Christmas except advice to keep up the populist rhetoric of his Kansas speech and add substance to it. As I and other economists have suggested, the President might promise to appoint a national commission on economic inequality. He could also support a transaction tax on global financial trading—and certainly in a second term, he could appoint a more progressive economic team.

At the White House this holiday season, he could host a showing of the new bio film *The Lady*, starring Michelle Yeoh (of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* fame), who plays activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in her twenty year struggle for democracy in Myanmar—a testament to the human spirit—and a lesson to Occupy that social change is hard, doesn't happen overnight, and requires strategy. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her staff watched the movie on her plane en route to Myanmar last week to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi.

My friend Sidney Blumenthal would be happy to give the President an autographed copy of his master work *The Clinton Wars* to remind him of the nature of his opponents and that the Republican Party of Newt Gingrich will never be his willing partner. The book is also

a case study of how Gingrich, latest hope of the Republican right, behaved the last time he held public office.

One book I'd include in Obama's stocking is the compelling nonfiction narrative, *In The Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson, the story of FDR's first ambassador to Hitler's Germany. It's a stranger than fiction tale of a university professor operating as America's top diplomat in Berlin, and his efforts to see clearly what is happening, inform the White House and wake up the public at home about the nature of the Nazi threat. If President Obama reads the book, it might inspire him in his second term to make a few out-of-the-box diplomatic appointments instead of rewarding big campaign donors with embassies, and to take bold initiatives to justify his Nobel Peace Prize. A good start would be making Samantha Power his national security adviser. At a recent speech at the University of California at Santa Barbara before an audience of Global Studies majors, MA students and faculty, I asked the crowd to name Obama's current NSC adviser. Not one person could do it.

A profile in the Home section of the *Financial Times* (Dec. 3-4), featured my brother-in-law, former Clinton diplomat, Strobe Talbott relaxing with his dogs, bear rug, books and classical guitar. The article focused on the "kitchen diplomacy" which Strobe and my late sister Brooke practiced around their kitchen table, bringing visiting diplomats and activists home for a casual meal and off-the-record talk which frequently led to on the record action. My strength is probably "book diplomacy" (some would say it's "dessert diplomacy"; I did serve Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream at high level dinners in my official residence in Helsinki). I always brought books on US politics, economics and history as gifts to diplomatic dinners in Finland—as well as See's candy. Living in Los Angeles as a

professor, not as an entertainment mogul, I don't host movie screenings; instead, we organize parties for our friends when they publish new works. I always give too many books to my children and grand children at Xmas. One year, tears ran down my son Anthony's cheeks as he opened package after package and found books not toys. (I'm more balanced as a grandfather—there are always toys.)

In addition to Erik Larson's book on the US ambassador in Hitler's Germany, I have a few non-fiction books to recommend:

Grand Pursuit—The Story of Economic Genius, by Sylvia Nasar, a former *New York Times* business reporter (her previous book *A Beautiful Mind* was made into an excellent film) is an elegant narrative of the lives and ideas of great political economists who grappled with the idea that economics is not a dismal science and can contribute to improving the welfare of the vast majority—the 99%. Every Occupy activist should take time out over the holidays to read it. The book is filled with insightful reporting. Who knew that Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* as his answer to Thomas Malthus' gloomy outlook on the economy or that Winston Churchill was an admirer of Keynes as well as a Keynesian in his policies.

The Deaths of Others—The Fate of Civilians In America's Wars, by John Tirman, Director of MIT's Center for International Studies, has been neglected by reviewers, perhaps intentionally although I hope it's only inadvertence. In a time of US drone attacks and hunter-killer teams, it's important to think about collateral damage in overseas wars. After all, the first Ground Zero was not in lower Manhattan, but in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Tirman thoughtfully explores why we are often indifferent if not oblivious to the civilian casualties of those with whom we do

battle. It is a book which provides historical context to today's debates about the use of military power and its consequences.

The Quest—Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World, by Daniel Yergin, author and energy consultant, is a sequel to his Pulitzer Prize winning epic, *The Prize*, which told the story of the rise of oil in the last century. The current story is not as easy to tell, but Yergin does an admirable job providing accessible narratives on all aspects of energy and the global economy. It is both a primer and a handy reference for your home library, as well as a source of good stories. Like Nasar's descriptions of engaged economists, Yergin provides tales of scientists, inventors and entrepreneurs as well as political leaders which illuminate the difficult challenges facing us in a world where the rest of humanity wants to live like Americans or Western Europeans.

The Hollywood Sign, by Leo Braudy, is a profile of an icon of my hometown LA which spells out Hollywood in the hills above Sunset Boulevard. It is also the story of Hollywood the industry and how it came to influence world culture. Braudy, a professor at USC, is one of the leading cultural historians in the country. His earlier work, *The Frenzy of Renown* on the making of celebrities in history, is a classic. I assigned his book to my class in Global Los Angeles at Occidental, and invited Braudy to speak to the students. He tells a fascinating story of how a sign originally designed to promote a real estate development has become a symbol of a city and emblematic of global culture. Along the way, you learn how we have Playboy founder Hugh Hefner and rocker Alice Cooper, among others, to thank for saving the sign for posterity.

Rock The Casbah—Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World, by Robin Wright. If

you can read only one book on the Arab spring and changes in Muslim countries, then this is the book. Wright is a former foreign correspondent for the *Washington Post*, now a fellow at Washington think tanks, and one of the more interesting writers and thinkers on the Middle East. Her book explores youth-inspired change in Islamic countries, and the role that popular culture—including social media and hip-hop—coupled with aspirations for human rights, entrepreneurship, and freedom of expression is playing in pushing social and political change. If Islamic-based parties come to power as a result of the Arab Spring—as seems likely—they will still have to respond to the hopes and desires of the young and to their new cultural awareness.

For relaxation from politics and economics and to get a perspective on other countries, I usually reach for a mystery or thriller with a foreign setting. An exception to the rule this year is my favorite fiction choice: *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead*, by Sara Gran. This is the start of a new and highly original series set in post-Katrina New Orleans. The heroine, private detective Claire DeWitt is as innovative and singular a character as Lisbeth Salander from the Millennium series. Don't miss her. I am also a fan of Vermont-based writer Archer Mayor and his Joe Gunther series set in Brattleboro and the Northeast. His latest is *Tag Man*.

This year marked the end of the *Kurt Wallander* series by Swedish author Henning Mankell with the publication of *The Troubled Man*. I don't think any author compares to Mankell in depicting the moral and social complexities of the post-Cold War era. If you haven't read any of Mankell, then you are in for an intellectual treat not unlike eating the finest salted chocolate caramels from Fran's of Seattle (official chocolate of the Obama White House). In addition, the novels have been made into exceptionally fine TV films in

Sweden and are now available in US format from MHz networks' online shop. MHz, a Virginia based station, which specializes in airing foreign mysteries, sells other favorites of ours including the Italian series *Detective Montalbano and Inspector Coliandro*, the *Varg Veum* series set in Bergen, Norway, and the German-made Donna Leon detective novels set in Venice. You don't need to have an all-region DVD player to watch them although I recommend buying one to watch mysteries from Australia, Great Britain, and Scandinavia without waiting for them to appear on PBS.

I've also had fun reading *Slash and Burn*, the latest in the *Dr. Siri* series by Colin Cotterill set in Laos, involving a search for the remains of CIA operatives. In another book this year—*Killed At The Whim Of A Hat*—Cotterill has begun a new series set in rural Thailand featuring a young woman reporter turned sleuth. His books have an ironic sense of humor and an accurate sense of place.

I haven't thought much of most feature films this year with the exception of *The Lady*, the bio pic already mentioned. In our house, we've mainly been watching British TV series like *Case Histories*, *Luther*, and *Downton Abbey*. Our favorite of the bunch is *The Hour*, a stunning BBC production starring Dominic West set in the Cold War '50s and focused on the first news magazine show on the air in Great Britain. In preparation for a new course which I will co-teach next term at Occidental on Sports, Diplomacy and Globalization, I have been previewing documentaries about sports and politics to show students. *Fire In Babylon* tells the little known story of the extraordinary and improbable rise of the West Indian cricket team to world class status. It is a journey overlaid with racism and colonialism and told with Reggae musical accompaniment. Equally moving and informative is *One Day* in September,

directed by Kevin Macdonald (winner of the Academy Award for best documentary), the story of the terrorist attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. McDonald unearths never before seen footage and startling new interviews to offer a nuanced narrative of a horrific event played out on the international sporting stage.

Looking to 2012, there are signs that we can keep hope alive and disappointment at bay—or at least have a few good things to hear or to read. Coming in January is a compilation of Bob Dylan songs performed by a host of great singers to benefit Amnesty International with liner notes by Princeton historian Sean Wilentz (and produced by my talented daughter Julie Yannatta). Also just after the New Year comes *The Age of Austerity*, written by Tom Edsall, one of the smartest political writers in the country. Formerly at the *Washington Post* and now a professor of journalism at Columbia, Edsall is writing a weekly column on politics for the *New York Times* which is fast becoming the gold standard of political analysis. Order his book in advance and use it as a guide to the attitudes, issues and interests which will affect the elections in 2012. Later in the year, there will be a new biography of Barack Obama—a seminal one—by *Washington Post* author David Maraniss whose book, *First In His Class*, is still the best book on the political rise of Bill Clinton, and a new cyber thriller by Daniel Suarez. His first novel *Daemon* is slated to become a major film.

Keep hope alive in your home and your heart. Don't let Republicans ruin your day. Beyond the reach of Fox news, progressive forces are actually winning. After all, Barbie has become a feminist (in *Barbie and the Three Musketeers* the girls save the Prince!), so a grandparent can safely give Barbie themed gifts. There are solar powered robotic toys for grandsons, and there is now a Toyota Prius

Station Wagon with room for dogs (we just bought one and love it). Books still matter. In the film *The Lady*, you will notice Aung San Suu Kyi reading Louis Fischer's classic, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, for inspiration and tactics. Ideas still count, not punditry.

Bill Gates is championing the Robin Hood Tax—a transaction on financial trades—to provide funds for economic development in poor nations, and the chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel has endorsed the idea. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has just spoken out forcefully in favor of global gay rights as essential human rights—and Angelina Jolie has directed her first picture, *In the Land of Milk and Honey*, about war atrocities in Bosnia. Go girls!

No doubt Occupy will surprise us with actions small and large in 2012—and perhaps we will have a national day of discussion and community teach-ins on economic inequality after all. It won't be boring.

Holiday Greetings and Happy New Year!

The Ambasadude

PS/Late Breaking Gift Suggestion

Our neighbor, legendary showman Fred Weintraub, is publishing his memoirs in January, and advance copies are now available from: www.fredweintraub.com. For years, Fred would regale us with stories of his days running The Bitter End night club in NYC where he launched the careers of Bill Cosby, Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, Neil Diamond, and many others. He provided entertainers for the White House, and discussed Joan Baez' sex life with LBJ. After his club days, Fred went on to produce over 40 films including the classic, "Enter The Dragon," which introduced the legendary Bruce Lee to the world. I kept saying to him,

"Write your memoirs, dude"—and he finally did. You can read about Fred's astounding and amusing life in "Bruce Lee, Woodstock and Me." Order before January 1, it's 30% off. The perfect gift for the Baby Boomer in your life.

Bye-Bye LAX, Hello LIZ: Honoring Elizabeth Taylor and Rebranding Los Angeles Airport

February 1, 2012—Huffington Post

As the race for the next Mayor of Los Angeles begins to heat up, a vital issue of public policy has gone unaddressed—the uninspiring name of our hometown airport, currently known as LAX.

The Los Angeles Board of Airport Commissioners has been sending residents a fancy brochure titled “LANext,” which touts terminal renovations, green technology improvements and upgrading of food and baggage facilities. This is all to the good, but we Angelenos are still stuck with a boring name for the major airport in one of the world’s great global cities. Home to the world’s entertainment industry—represented to the world by the iconic Hollywood sign—Los Angeles deserves something better and more appropriate to our heritage and our future than the initials LAX.

New York has JFK, an airport named after a president, and so does Washington, D.C., with Reagan National. D.C. even has Dulles, named after a former diplomat. All are appropriate and make definitive statements to world travelers. Paris has Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG), named after a national hero and a president of France—and Liverpool renamed its airport after local working class hero John Lennon. It’s time that Los Angeles follow the lead set by our sister cities in Southern California. After all, Burbank named its airport after Bob Hope, and the main airport in Orange County is named after John Wayne.

LA should step up to the global marketing plate and rename our airport after Elizabeth Taylor, one of the great movie actresses of modern times. LAX should become LIZ.

Over breakfast recently with my wife Sue Toigo (daughter of actor parents) and visiting marketing consultant Martin Walker of A.T. Kearney, we briefly considered other alternatives such as Marilyn Monroe. While a beautiful and famous, yet troubled, woman, Marilyn doesn’t have the stature of Elizabeth Taylor.

“Liz Taylor was the epitome of global glamour,” says Martin Walker, “and at the same time, a hard working, devoted professional. She embodied that magical place where myth and reality intersect, and that is the branding that LA needs for the 21st Century.”

As a new book, *The Accidental Feminist*, by LA-based author M.G. Lord makes clear, Elizabeth Taylor “raised our consciousness...” She started her career playing a young horsewoman in *National Velvet* and went on to become Cleopatra in the eyes of moviegoers around the world. She was strong enough to handle five husbands, including Richard Burton (whom she married twice). She worked tirelessly to raise funds to combat AIDS, and she was a strong supporter of gay rights. She displayed in life much that those coming to LA aspire to be—beautiful, talented, successful, socially conscious and politically relevant—and she was never boring.

It would also be an important statement to name LA’s airport after a woman. We could not find a major city airport in the US named after a female—and there are only a few such in the world. These exceptions include Indira Gandhi Airport in Delhi and Benazir Bhutto Airport in Islamabad, both named after slain

prime ministers. The airport in Amman is named after Queen Alia, third wife of former Jordanian King Hussein.

As UCSD professor Steve Erie, author of the classic *Globalizing LA* told us, "The LA airport needs rebranding. While LAX lacks, LIZ clearly sizzles. The opportunity should be seized."

I'm a native Angeleno, son of journalist parents who chronicled Hollywood's golden era. Like many of my friends, I understand and value the cultural heritage which Elizabeth Taylor personifies. My wife and I are putting Eric Garcetti, Wendy Greuel, Austin Beutner, Jan Perry and other mayoral candidates on notice that we won't support any candidate who does not endorse renaming LAX in honor of Elizabeth Taylor. In fact, we hope that it won't even be a contentious issue in the mayor's race. The current LA airport commission (a majority of whom have been appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa) could get the ball rolling by petitioning the FAA to change the name from LAX to LIZ. The FAA has allowed changes in the past, such as Idlewild Airport which became JFK. All of the candidates could signal their support, as could the current mayor. The cost of new signage would be easily offset by the millions of dollars in free world wide publicity.

Imagine how cool it would be to tell your visitors that you will be picking them up at LIZ.

Can Sports Save the World? Reflections of a Former Little Leaguer on Sports, Diplomacy, and Globalization

June 8, 2012—Huffington Post

This weekend, my hometown Los Angeles Kings will play the Devils in New Jersey for the Stanley Cup hockey championship—a sport which originated in Canada and is played professionally in the US by stars from Finland, Sweden, and Russia, as well as Canada and the US. Not much of a hockey fan, I'm more tuned in to the NBA playoffs. I'm rooting for the young upstarts on the Oklahoma Thunder after they defeated my favorite team, the Los Angeles Lakers. My colleague David Axeen is planning his weekend around the European soccer championship, starting today in Poland and Ukraine, which will be televised in real time on ESPN—a sign of the sport's increasing popularity with Americans. British soccer star David Beckham now plays for the Los Angeles Galaxy. You can see him in hamburger ads or modeling underwear on TV almost any evening.

Other friends are planning their summer trips to London to attend the 2012 Olympics. The sports pages of the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* are filled with stories about the training regimens and back stories of potential medal winners. Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt—"the fastest man in the world"—is modeling a line of brightly colored clothes designed by Cedella Marley, daughter of the famous reggae singer. Sponsored by Puma, the Jamaican team jackets will include Bob Marley's face on the shoulder. The success of Bolt and other Jamaican sprinters has been a boost to Jamaica's international image. It's no surprise that Stella McCartney, daughter of Paul, was asked to design the outfits for Team Great Britain.

A love of sports—playing, watching, arguing, rooting, buying gear—is one of the great commonalities of being human. Along with religion, music, and, of course, war and trade—sports is a global activity which crosses borders and has the power to unite as well as divide. Sports diplomacy is increasingly an important tool in the "soft power" arsenal of nations. An invitation from Mao and Chou En Lai to the US ping pong team to visit China paved the way for Nixon's famous visit and the opening of relations between the two countries. During the Clinton administration, the US tried wrestling diplomacy with Iran to make overtures to the revolutionary government, and baseball diplomacy has been attempted with Cuba a number of times.

When I served as US Ambassador to Finland, I regularly greeted visiting US sports teams. I engaged in a free throw contest at a Finnish basketball game, and threw out the ball at the championship game in the Finnish American football league at the Olympic stadium. The US embassy team on which I played point guard defeated the Russian embassy for the diplomatic cup. During a speaking tour of China in the late 90s, I recognized that the most famous American in the country was not President Clinton, but basketball star Michael Jordan. Photos of him airborne in his Nike shoes adorned the walls of cafes and dorm rooms.

Under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the State Department has increased its efforts at sports diplomacy. Hillary recently named NBA great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as a cultural ambassador and sent him to Brazil. The US

has sent top women snowboarders Amber Stackhouse and Erin Comstock to Armenia where they visited Yerevan and judged local competitions at a ski resort. Hillary has made it a priority to promote female participation in sports around the world.

Other countries also understand the use of sports as effective public diplomacy. New Zealand has used its love of rugby and the international success of the All Blacks to engage in rugby diplomacy. The success of Serbian tennis players on the international circuit has helped to change attitudes about that country and its checkered past. Nelson Mandela made use of the world rugby tournament to highlight his public support for the Spring Boks—the favorite team of Afrikaners—to reach out to white South Africans (a story told by Clint Eastwood in the film *Invictus*).

As a former Little League player and currently an aging point guard who plays basketball twice a week, I understand the appeal of sports from the joy of winning the “big game” and playing well on the field to the excitement of being a fan and watching your local team. As a professor of diplomacy and globalization, I am intrigued with how sports has gone global in the post-Cold War era, and what it might mean for bringing people together across borders and bridging political and social differences.

This term, my friend and colleague at Occidental College emeritus professor of American Studies, David Axeen, and I decided to explore these issues in a new course, *Sports and Diplomacy in a Globalized World*. The academic study of sports has gone viral. There are academic journals (*Sports and History*, *Sports and Society*, etc.), new experts like sports economists (Andrew Zimbalist at Smith is the star of the field), and sports institutes popping up at major

universities. Not being proper academics in the field, we decided to approach the subject more as amateur athletes who happen to be professors. We wanted to cast as wide an intellectual net as possible in constructing a survey course for undergraduates.

We selected as our basic text a new book, *Gaming The World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture*, by professors Andrei Markovits and Lars Rensman, which addresses many of the issues which seem most relevant to us. In addition, we assigned topic-specific works, including: *Beyond a Boundary*, C.L.R. James’ classic memoir of playing cricket in the West Indies; *Soccernomics* by Kuper and Syzmanski, popular sports economists; Robert Whiting’s reportage on Americans playing baseball in Japan—*You Gotta Have Wa*; British journalist John Carlin’s book, *Invictus: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation*; and diplomatic historian Walter LaFerber’s book, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*. We also posted current articles from the sports pages of the *New York Times* which continually offers the best in-depth reporting on the global world of sports.

To accompany the reading, we organized a weekly *Sports and Diplomacy* film series, as well as a slate of visiting lecturers. The films included: *Chariots of Fire* and *One Day In September*, both on the Olympics; *Mr. Baseball* starring Tom Selleck as an aging Big Leaguer who goes to play in Japan; *The Two Escobars*, a haunting study of soccer and drugs in Colombia; *Fire In Babylon*, a documentary on the rise of the West Indies cricket team to world champion; *Harlem Globetrotters—The Team That Changed the World*, on the role of the team in integrating the NBA and serving as US sports ambassadors; *Invictus*, of course, on sports and politics in the new South Africa; and

Youngblood, about a young American playing ice hockey in small town Canada.

We opened the course with off beat presentations by a yoga expert on why competitive yoga should be an Olympic sport and a philosophical discourse by a professor on why curling is the most democratic sport in the world. From there we went international with a short history of the Olympics in which British journalist David Goldblatt romped through every modern Olympics in 90 minutes—an impressive feat. For those planning to watch the London Olympics, we recommend David's companion book, *How to Watch the Olympics—Scores and laws, heroes and zeroes: an instant initiation into every sport*. Goldblatt made it clear that the Olympics are more than one thing. They are a global spectacle, a tool for national promotion and economic development, a substitute for war through peaceful competition (a big deal during the Cold War), and a celebration of individual physical prowess, skill and courage—all played out on the global stage, and now televised to billions.

Author Robert Whiting explained how baseball was adapted to the Japanese cultural setting and how the lure of the Major Leagues is changing aspirations of Japan's best players. The Canadian consul general in Los Angeles, David Franzen, a former amateur hockey player, addressed the question: "If Canadians Are So Polite, Why Is Hockey So Violent?" He also explained the origins of hockey in the neighborhood clubs of Montreal. Professor Nigel Boyle from Pitzer College gave a brilliant lecture on European soccer and how the teams reflect national character (well worth noting for those who plan to watch the European championships this week and see if the Spanish team, La Roja, can repeat).

We called on Oxy's sport coaches to discuss their fields. Long-time Oxy rugby coach Michael Godfree regaled students with stories of international rugby competition. A new book, *Rugby for Dummies*, co-authored by two former Oxy rugby players coached by Godfree is dedicated to him. Oxy basketball coach Brian Newhall talked about his days playing professional basketball in France, and told students how one of his best Oxy players, an Asian American, was recruited to play professional basketball in China and had to pretend to be native Chinese to avoid the limit on foreign players.

Oxy soccer coach Colm McFreely reminisced about playing soccer in Ireland and how the teams reflected religious differences, giving the students a window in to cultural identity and sports. He also talked about his days as a player and coach in Hong Kong. Dean of the college Jorge Gonzalez, a leading Mexican economist, gave a lecture on the joys of being a fan and how he spent a month following the Mexican national team around South Africa during the World Cup. For the session on cricket, we asked two Oxy colleagues, professor Elmer Griffin and campus policeman Joe Cunje, to organize a demonstration match on an Oxy playing field. They divided the class in to sides, sent them out on to the "pitch" and let them try their luck. In his classroom lecture, Professor Griffin, a native of Nevis in the West Indies, deconstructed James' *Beyond a Boundary*, and challenged the students to think about sports which are spread by colonial powers, and then adopted by local peoples. Cricket, spread by the British Empire, is now the national sport of India, as well as the West Indies. Soccer, a more working class sport in England, was spread informally by British economic interests and has become the most popular sport in the world (see David Goldblatt's book, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Football*). Invented by James

Naismith in Springfield, Massachusetts, basketball was initially made popular abroad by YMCA missionaries, including in China. Later, the NBA and Nike took over the job.

In the second half of the course, we gave students the stage. For team presentations, we selected five themes: Economics and the global business of sports; Nationalism and international sports competition; Race, ethnicity and religion (and the relationship to colonial and imperial history); Gender in sports; Sports Diplomacy and sports as “soft power.”

In their oral presentations, the students covered sports like track and field, golf, tennis, and sailing which we had neglected in our lectures and films. They probed the impact of nationalism on sports, especially during the Cold War, analyzing events like the famous US-U.S.S.R. hockey match and “soccer wars” in Central America, and explored the promotion of sports and sports figures by global companies like Nike and Adidas. The role of race and gender in sports and the progress that has been made in both areas were examined, including a presentation by an Oxy athlete who is the only registered female golf caddy in California. Sad to say, racism is not gone from international sports. Many family members of the British national soccer team (one-third of whose players are black) have decided to stay home rather than listen to the racial taunts of fans in Ukraine.

The topics of student research papers varied widely, although soccer proved to be the most popular. Brazil’s preparations for the World Cup and the Olympics were analyzed, as well as the impact that hosting the World Cup had on South Africa. Two students interviewed the Consul General of New Zealand about the importance of rugby for promoting Kiwi soft power. One student

looked at the role of sports in North Korea and how the state uses sports for national interests. Another described the tensions between soccer teams in Israel over the role of Arab players. An interesting paper was written on the history of baseball in Cuba and the impact of the US embargo. And another described the social and political import of maintaining Irish national sports against the inroads of British games like soccer.

A few papers explored the expansion of NBA recruiting to Africa and its positive and negative effects in countries like Senegal. One paper, by the son of a diplomat, looked at the rise of Asian basketball players in the NBA from Yao Ming to Jeremy Lin. The most outstanding paper was a description and analysis of the rivalry between two Spanish soccer teams—Real Madrid and Barcelona—which for decades symbolized and reflected political and regional tensions in Spain. The annual match, El Classico, as it is called, is the title of new documentary by Los Angeles filmmaker Kelly Candaele. The next time that the course is taught we will add the film to our play list.

Professor Axeen and I did not press the students for a conclusion or an answer to the question in the title of this post. Of course, sports can’t save the world from the effects of global warming or by themselves solve economic inequality in the world economy. For that, politics is required.

Is sports a global business with all the contradictions that come with it? Certainly, and it’s not necessarily a bad thing. It is preferable that young men and women get paid well to compete on the sports field with rules, referees and fans rather than as gladiators for the amusement of the mob or as soldiers on a field of battle.

Do sports build character? Not so much as they reveal character. Character is built by good parenting, strong families, and decent communities. However, sports can represent universal values of hard work, discipline, focus, courage, and teamwork. Organized sports is also a good model of regulated competition and equal opportunity.

Can sports be used more effectively to bring people together across boundaries and religious and ethnic differences? Absolutely. Is sports a good vehicle for spreading a nation's soft power. Yes, there should be more sports diplomacy, not less. We are going to make sports diplomacy one of our ongoing areas of research and action in Occidental's Center on Global Affairs and Politics.

As someone who has always viewed himself as a scholar and an athlete, I believe that sports should be a part of everyone's life—that we should all play a sport, not simply watch others play. Of course, watching the best players in a sport and rooting for your home team are also part of the human experience. Check your TV menu for some great games this weekend. Play ball, now and forever.

POSTSCRIPT

Two excellent books which explore the world of sports were published after we began teaching our Oxy course. *The Ball—Discovering the Object of the Game*, by anthropologist John Fox, explores the historical beginnings of popular sports and reflects on why we play and watch ball games. The book is part history and part travelogue. Indian-born Mihir Bose, one of the world's leading sports journalists and the author of books on cricket and soccer, has written his magnum opus, *The Spirit of the Game: How Sport Made the Modern World*. He asks how changes in the sporting world

have affected the spirit of the game, and whether globalization has destroyed what is most important about sports. Bose takes the reader along on a world tour as he seeks answers. Either book might fit well with a general course on sports and globalization or simply make great summer reading when you are not playing or watching a game.

After Obama Wins: What to Expect, What to Work For

August 8, 2012—Huffington Post

The waning days of summer are not a bad time to consider what an Obama second term might mean for the country. Olympic fever is almost past, the NFL season hasn't started, and the hoopla of the two national conventions is not yet a distraction. The race seems Obama's to lose—it is an up or down verdict on his presidency. The public is not taken with the challenger. Even his own party leaders have a hard time warming to Mitt Romney. If he were to win, it's likely Romney would be hostage to his party's right wing elements.

"To envisage what Republicans would do if they win in November, the person to understand is not necessarily Romney, who has been a policy cipher all his public life," writes Ryan Lizza in the *New Yorker*. "The person to understand is Paul Ryan."

Rather than worrying about the depressing scenario of a Romney administration, I prefer to assume that Obama will win, probably a narrow victory (although one shouldn't underestimate Romney's tendency to put his foot his mouth at a key moment like a televised debate), with the House remaining in Republican hands, and the Senate still under narrow Democratic control. Absent a decisive Obama victory like that of four years ago, it is recipe for gridlock and endless partisan bickering unless Obama can step up his game as President.

What can we expect?

The signals from the Obama White House and political team are not encouraging. They are understandably cautious and focused on winning re-election as opposed to laying out a clear and inspiring agenda for a second term. *New Yorker* political reporter Ryan Lizza

tackled the question, "What If Obama Wins?," in a long article in the *New Yorker* earlier this summer. While Obama has sharpened his populist rhetoric for the re-election campaign, Lizza heard familiar talk about bi-partisanship, quoting Obama on the campaign trail that he "believes that if we're successful in this election—when we're successful in this election—that the fever may break." Obama likes to repeat the phrase, "If we can break this fever," suggesting that he can somehow bring Republicans back into civil political dialogue.

A Romney loss to Obama in November is not going to change the nature of the Republican party, and Barack Obama is not going to charm them into better behavior.

Will Obama face up to this reality and become a stronger and more canny leader? We will get an indication in the lame duck session after the election, when decisions have to be made about the expiration of the Bush tax cuts and forced major budget cuts. On Jan. 1, all the Bush tax cuts expire and the next day, absent a bi-partisan agreement on major deficit reduction, \$100 billion must be cut from government spending, divided equally between defense and non-defense spending (not including Social Security and Medicare). Pundits are calling it the Fiscal Cliff.

The economics of the post-election situation is explained in a new book, *Red Ink-Inside the High-Stakes Politics of the Federal Budget*, by David Wessel, economics editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. This is the most useful book on government spending since the publication of the classic work, *The Debt and Deficit* by Robert Heilbroner and Peter

Bernstein. In the service of economic literacy, I wish that a few members of the House and the Senate would read the entire book aloud on the floor of the respective chambers (but don't hold your breath). As Wessel makes clear, this is a fight about values and visions of society, not economics. Yes, there is economic reality such as the aging Baby Boomer population and the cost of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the choices about whom to tax and how to spend are political.

Will Obama hang tough and play a game of budget chicken? Former *New York Times* editor, columnist Bill Keller advocates such a strategy (*New York Times Review*, Sunday, July 22, 2012), advising Obama to invite Congressional leaders to Camp David after the election, put a credible deficit plan on the table which combines taxes with spending cuts, and if no deal emerges, then do nothing and let loose the dogs of finance. "Does Obama have it in him?" asks Keller. "Well, here's his chance to show us what we can expect if he's re-elected: fruitful leadership, or another four years of gridlock."

How Obama handles the Fiscal Cliff will certainly be an indication of what to expect from him in his second term—but we should not simply rely on Obama and his White House team to display fortitude and political will. They will need a broad political strategy and consistent and constant pressure from outside of Washington to prevail over Republican obstructionism. It needs to be more thoughtful than the random acts of protest by the Occupy movement which as a political force has proved to have little staying power (see my post, "Memo to Occupy," Huffington Post, October 12, 2011, for how it could have been otherwise). In a second term, Obama has the opportunity to alter the terms of public debate on the major issues of the day. Here's my proposed agenda for action:

INEQUALITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

In the past thirty years, economic inequality has increased in the US, and economic mobility, especially for minority and working class Americans has stagnated. This is not opinion, but fact, as a number of recent books make eminently clear: *The Price of Inequality—How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*, by Nobel prize economist Joseph Stiglitz, *The Great Divergence—America's Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It*, by Timothy Noah, *Inequality and Instability: A Study of the World Economy Just Before the Great Crisis* by Texas economist James K. Galbraith, and *So Rich, So Poor—Why It's So Hard to End Poverty in America*, by Peter Edelman, former RFK adviser and professor of law at Georgetown.

Obama is talking in the campaign about millionaires paying their fair share, and he does try to explain how we are all in this together—that no one gets rich by acting alone. He can make good on the rhetoric by appointing a Presidential Commission on Inequality and Economic Opportunity, chaired by Stiglitz or Galbraith, which would hold public hearings, present the facts on income and wealth inequality as well as declining economic opportunity and offer policy remedies. The point of a Stiglitz or Galbraith Commission is to change the focus of public debate from the deficit to inequality and economic stagnation, and to propose measures to address the worsening situation. It might even be couched in terms of the fading American Dream. A creative White House communications office could shape this into an aggressive PR strategy. The material from hearings would provide substance for more candidates in 2014 with the fervor and commitment of Elizabeth Warren.

IMMIGRATION AND VOTER ID

The issues of illegal immigration, race, and the right to vote are conflated in the fight in key campaign states over Republican-sponsored Voter ID legislation whose purpose is to suppress voter turnout among minorities more likely to support Obama. The president's campaign and outside civil rights groups are contesting these measures, but the situation is fraught and will not be resolved by a narrow Obama victory. The president could display strategic leadership by proposing a measure which would have appeal on the right and left—namely, a national citizen and voter ID card.

Issuing such a card to all US citizens would be part of immigration reform and clearer enforcement of existing Federal law. However, it would also be linked to automatic national voter registration. Every citizen of the United States would be registered to vote for life in every Federal election as a right of citizenship. In addition, national elections would be established as a Federal holiday. Voter turnout would increase, making the country more democratic and more representative. Issues of voter fraud would disappear; and a step taken towards rationalizing the immigration system. Some conservatives and perhaps some civil libertarians would cry Big Brother, but the majority of Americans already accept Social Security cards and cards for Medicare. A national ID card could be produced in a harder to counterfeit format than current Social Security cards or state driver's licenses. Greater voter participation would mean more attention to issues which affect those in the lower half of the income spectrum. UC Irvine law professor Richard Hasen, author of *The Voting Wars—From Florida 2000 to the Next Election Meltdown*, the best account of our flawed voting system, concludes with a recommendation similar to mine, but Hasen is

pessimistic that Congress would ever pass such a reform. Until a President steps up and fights for it, we won't know.

GLOBAL WARMING

In his first term, Obama's approach to the issue was a failure. Both the policy approach—cap and trade—and the rhetoric were wrong headed. The clearest and simplest policy tool is a carbon tax with a built-in progressive rebate. Of course, there also needs to be international climate change negotiations, especially with China. But, to make progress at home and abroad, Obama first needs to win over public opinion on the consequences of global warming for Americans. He has scientific opinion on his side. The summer's headlines practically scream it out: "The Conversion of a Climate-Change Skeptic" (*New York Times*, July 30, 2012), "Study Predicts More Hot Spells in SoCal," (*Los Angeles Times*, June 31, 2012), "Study Finds More of Earth Is Hotter and Says Global Warming Is at Work," (*New York Times*, August 7, 2012), "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," (*Rolling Stone*, August 2, 2012).

Obama should appoint a Presidential Commission on The Economic and Social Consequences of Global Warming, and task it with reporting back to him on the costs of drought, wild fires, and extreme weather to the US economy and on the predicted future costs of such change in the climate to the US. The only way that he can build sufficient political momentum to pass a carbon tax is to publicize the immediate as well as future costs of global warming for Americans, rather than predictions of future disasters in other countries. As with economic inequality, the issue will also require a more creative and aggressive communications strategy from the White House.

DRONES AND LONG-DISTANCE KILLING

Obama has partly inoculated himself against Republican charges of weakness abroad by ordering the raid which led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden. More controversial is the ad hoc legal regime which he is using to support his “kill decisions” in the White House where he personally okays the targeted killing of jihadist leaders in countries such as Pakistan and Somalia. The way that Obama has handled these issues is explored in a new book, *Kill or Capture—The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency*, by former *Newsweek* journalist Daniel Klaidman.

“Ever since having taken office, feeling the full weight of his responsibility in preventing the next terrorist attack,” concludes Klaidman:

Obama had been guided by a different set of metrics: the more terrorists killed or captured, the less likely one of them would slip through and attack the homeland. Without notice or public debate, Obama had gone far beyond what his liberal supporters ever imagined, appalling them with a steady torrent of targeted killings and other kinetic operations. It had to be said that he succeeded far beyond all expectations... by early 2012, al-Qaeda was largely a spent force, its leaders dead or in hiding, its finances drying up, and its seemingly endless pipeline of recruits blocked.

Whatever the short term success of Obama’s actions, there are larger issues which are raised by the use of drones. For what remains of the summer, I recommend that you read a new thriller, *Kill Decision*, by Daniel Suarez, a chilling, harrowing depiction of the near future when other countries have drones at their disposal, and the “kill decision” is not made legally or carefully by an American

President, but is programmed into the drones’ micro-chips. I hope that the President will take Suarez’ novel on Air Force One as his end of summer reading.

There is already the beginnings of a global drone industry and a military-drone industrial complex. With success against al-Qaeda to his credit, it is time for Obama to step back and call for an international conference on the use (and abuse of drones) and the development of international legal protocols which regulate the use of drones in espionage and war.

A NEW INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Good jobs for Americans in the future require a strong manufacturing base. President Obama recognized this when he supported financial assistance and restructuring for General Motors—but it was just crisis management not long term policy. Attention to the state of US industry and how it can intelligently be supported should be part of the government’s economic policy tools. The best way to accomplish this is to restructure the Department of Commerce along the lines outlined in my Huffington Post article at the beginning of Obama’s first term—“Advice to the President: Abolish the Commerce Department,” (February 16, 2009), spinning off agencies like the Census and the Weather Bureau, and establishing a streamlined Department of Industry and Trade, supported by a high quality Commercial Service. It was the smart thing to do four years ago, and it still is. This time around, he could also appoint progressive economists like James Galbraith and Barry Bluestone who understand the importance of industrial policy.

After Obama wins, we should expect more of him than he has shown in his first term. We should hold him to a standard of fighting

leadership which the seriousness of the issues of our times requires—and make his legacy one we fight for and will be proud of. We shouldn't settle for less. As Bob Marley says (and the Jamaican track team takes to heart), "Don't give up the fight."

Celebrating the Season and Obama's Victory: Will He Be a Great President?

December 8, 2012—Huffington Post

This holiday season, I'm most grateful for President Obama's hard fought win at the polls. At a time of high unemployment, facing a vicious, lie-based attack fueled by millions in donations from right wing individuals, coupled with unscrupulous attempts to suppress voter participation, the country's first black president won a sweeping electoral victory. It is a triumph for American democracy—and a thumbs-up for the power of diversity.

We are celebrating Obama and his winning coalition. James Taylor's new holiday album, "James Taylor at Christmas," is playing in the house. Taylor was stalwart in his support of the Obama team, and almost as hard working as Bruce Springsteen, who toured the final weeks of the campaign with Bill Clinton. (When Bruce Springsteen makes a Christmas album, we'll play that too.)

A holiday shout out to former President Clinton for his speech at the Democratic convention, and his tireless campaigning for Obama and other Democrats. We give Clinton hugs and Obama fist bumps to our holiday visitors. We are not fretting about the "fiscal cliff," debating what to do about the fighting in Syria or gossiping about whether Hillary will run in four years. Politics are on hold.

Most of the world is celebrating, too. They are relieved that Obama won.

In the aftermath of the election, I was in the UK giving talks to students and professors at Cambridge University and St. Andrews (Scotland's oldest university) on what to expect from the Obama administration in the next four years. My narrative device was to

ask them to consider whether Obama will be judged to be a great American president after his second term. I began by saying that I give him an A for effort in his first term, but only a B or B+ for his accomplishments and his leadership. I explained that Obama himself has had private dinners with leading US historians to discuss other American presidents, and that he measures himself against the best American leaders. I also polled students in my course on Obama's foreign policy at Occidental, and together with the UK students, I found that opinion was split about 50-50 as to whether history would consider Barack Obama a great political leader.

Of course, the students and the rest of us get to watch and come to our own conclusions after four years. The Obama saga will be televised, and what could be more educational than watching history being made. Here are a few metrics to consider.

If he can accomplish any of these diplomatic coups: realize a two state solution to the Israel-Palestine situation; negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran and normalize relations as Nixon did with China; bring about an international treaty on climate change; unite South and North Korea; or normalize relations with Cuba and revitalize relations with Latin America, then he will certainly deserve the Nobel Peace Prize which he was awarded in his first term.

On the domestic front, he could make history with comprehensive immigration reform and most importantly, with economic reforms which revive manufacturing in the US and begin to improve American wages for the middle and working class. Above all, he could

shift the public debate from the deficit to inequality and declining economic opportunity. He might also strengthen American democracy through permanent changes in voting rules and procedures to make it simple and easy for every American to vote in national elections. To achieve any of these will take political will and wile.

There will probably be other opportunities for greatness. Does Obama have the *right stuff*? A few signs are positive. Unlike the 2011 negotiations over the debt ceiling, Obama is taking a tougher stance on tax issues in the face-off on the fiscal cliff, and he is building public support for his positions with speeches and town meetings outside the Beltway. A few well-chosen holiday gifts might help reinforce these emerging leadership qualities.

I've given the president my fair share of public and private advice (see "After Obama Wins"). In the spirit of the season, I offer him these gifts (or at least gifting suggestions for Michelle). In the book department, there is no better choice than *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* by Jon Meacham, and as for a film to show at the White House over the holidays, the hands down choice is *Lincoln*, with Daniel Day Lewis' extraordinary performance of a president using political skill to win passage of the 13th Amendment. The relevance of both is obvious.

For the girls Malia and Sasha, I suggest CDs by lively, upbeat Scottish bands which I have rediscovered—The Proclaimers, twin brothers from the environs of Edinburgh whose music is being used as the soundtrack for the filming of *Sunshine on Leith*, a kind of Scottish *Mama Mia*, and The Bay City Rollers, whose classic song "Bye Bye Baby" is featured in the film *Love Actually*, our holiday favorite. I've also asked Jackson Browne to make sure that the Obama family has an ample supply of his delicious "Jackie and

Eddie" all-natural ginger cookies. Jackson's partner, environmental activist Deanna Cohen, can gift Malia and Sasha with metal straws for sipping healthy sodas—part of her effort to promote a plastic free environment in offices and schools. I'm confident that Obama's staff will maintain his supply of sea salt chocolate caramels from Fran's of Seattle—the official chocolate of the Obama White House, packed in a blue box with the presidential seal.

Here are my other favorites of the year, all available for gifting or self-purchase:

NON-FICTION

Barack Obama: The Story, by David Maraniss, a great book to read if you'd like an understanding of the President's improbable journey to the White House. Maraniss is the award winning author of *First In His Class* on the rise of Bill Clinton, and books on such iconic sports figures as Roberto Clemente and Vince Lombardi. In many ways, Obama's life story is the story of the 20th Century. For excellent reporting on Obama's national security team and his first term as a war president, there is no better source than *The Obamians*, by former *Los Angeles Times* foreign correspondent James Mann. I used it successfully as a text in my fall course at Occidental.

The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey, by Candice Millard. After the ill-fated Progressive campaign, Teddy Roosevelt retired from politics and took a trip down an uncharted river in the Amazon with his grown son Kermit, accompanied by the most famous Brazilian explorer of the day. This is a true story that reads like a thriller (and would make a good movie). Millard is a brilliant narrative writer who provides details on the natural and political history of Brazil. I read the book while in the country to give

pre-election talks at universities in Sao Paulo and Rio, enjoyed every page, and came away with a new appreciation of Teddy's admirable qualities. I also recommend her other non-fiction narrative, *Destiny of the Republic*, on the assassination of President James Garfield and the advent of modern medical science.

How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It, by Arthur Herman. This is the kind of book from which you learn something new on almost every page. It is serious history, well researched, and written with verve and style. I read it in Scotland and came away with a feeling of pride for my heritage (my great grandmother is from Dundee), and for the contributions of the Scots to world history. Most of the story is set in Edinburgh, and as we walked the streets, stood by the statue of Adam Smith, a great moralist as well as a political economist, and took in the atmosphere of the town, I felt as if I could sense David Hume explaining his political philosophy in a near by coffee house. The Scottish National Museum had mounted an exhibition on the great explorer David Livingston whom author Herman profiles in the book, and we eagerly took it in.

From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia, by Pankaj Mishra. The author is Indian-born, living and writing in London. This is an important and thought provoking book, certain to win many awards. Mishra tells the story of 20th Century Asian thinkers who faced the superior power and status of the West and tried to analyze and advocate responses. It is a magnificent work which all Western "leaders" and policy thinkers should read for a different perspective on global history, especially now as India and China have emerged as rising powers. Mishra's earlier work, *The*

Temptations of the West, is also an excellent read.

China Airborne, by James Fallows. If you can read only one new book on China this year, this is the one. Fallows is one of America's best journalists. He and his wife Deborah spent three years living in China, and this is his latest work based on that experience. Fallows tells the story of China's aspirations to become an international air power and construct a modern airplane industry; he reports the little known story of the role that western experts and companies have played in assisting China to become airborne.

The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics, by Thomas Edsall, is the best book of political analysis of 2012. Edsall's weekly on line column in the *New York Times* provoked sophisticated and thoughtful discussion of politics throughout the Presidential race. Edsall is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand why conflict and partisanship will not go away any time soon.

The Signal and the Noise: Why Most Predictions Fail But Some Don't, by Nate Silver. The author is a statistics geek, *New York Times* columnist, and unlikely hero to Obama supporters during the campaign. Silver's analysis of polling data and his prediction of a strong Obama electoral victory (he called every state correctly) rattled Republicans, infuriated right wing pundits, and reassured Democrats. A famous poster read: Keep Calm and Read Nate Silver. He got his start with sports statistics and then turned his attention to public opinion polling and politics. *New York Times* editor Bill Keller made a brilliant call in signing Silver up as a columnist. The rest, as they say, is history. Silver has written a serious book on the use and misuse of data. It's not a perfect book, but if you are looking for a book on statistics

and decision making this should be your choice. You can also leave it on your coffee table to impress your friends and keep them calm.

FICTION

My enjoyment of detective fiction goes back to university days when a friend introduced me to the Boston-based novels of Robert Parker and his engaging knight errant Spenser. Ever since, I have sought out well written novels with a strong sense of place—and shared my favorites with other pals including my brother-in-law Strobe Talbott, Bill Clinton, Tom Edsall, and others in our generational cohort. I'm also a fan of realistic spy thrillers, starting with the classic works by Eric Ambler and moving on to John Le Carré and others.

This year brought good reads from many of my favorite authors. Ian Rankin brought back his Edinburgh cop John Rebus in *Standing on Another Man's Grave*, which I happily bought on my trip to Scotland. In *The Black Box*, former *Los Angeles Times* crime reporter Michael Connelly has produced another finely honed tale of his hero, LA cop Harry Bosch. The first book in the Harry Hole detective series, *The Bat*, by Norwegian author Jo Nesbø has been published, recounting Harry's investigative trip to Australia. Qiu Xiaolong, a professor of literature at Washington University, St. Louis, produced *Don't Cry Tai Lake*, featuring Shanghai detective Inspector Chen dealing with the politics and intrigue of environmental pollution. Reading the Inspector Chen series (which debuted with *Death of a Red Heroine*) is a good way to get a feel for life in contemporary China. Another ex-pat writer, Tarquin Hall, informs and entertains with another Vish Puri mystery (self-styled "India's Greatest Detective"), *The Case of the Deadly Butter Chicken*, which tackles the world of

professional cricket and India's fraught relations with Pakistan. You learn a lot about modern India while enjoying Vish Puri's exploits.

In the future history/thriller category, I read Ian McDonald's *Brasyl*, a compelling tale told in three interlocking stories set in past, present and future Brazil. Reading it while on a trip to Sao Paulo and Rio made it all the more enjoyable. McDonald has written equally nuanced and challenging futuristic novels about India (*River of Gods*), and Turkey (*The Dervish House*). McDonald has also started a series for younger readers, beginning with *Planesrunner*—an excellent gift for the thinking teen in your life.

My search for airplane and late night reading, led me to discover new authors in 2012. Among the best:

The Neruda Case, by Roberto Ampuero is a rare treat—a literary thriller set against the backdrop of the Chilean coup against Allende. It begins when Detective Cayetano Brule is engaged by Neruda himself to solve a mystery and develops into a political thriller as the investigation turns into an examination of Neruda's life, his loves, and his accomplishments as a Nobel prize winning and adored poet of the nation. It is a wonderful novel, and would make a fine film.

The Dawn Patrol, by Don Winslow is easily the best surfer detective novel ever written. To say that I got hooked on Winslow's work this summer, would be putting it mildly. I'm a California native son, born and raised in Southern California, and while an indifferent surfer (after standing up on my board once, I retired), I love the history and politics of the region. No one writes about surfing, crime and politics (including the drug wars south of the border) better than Don Winslow. I ended up reading every one of Winslow's novels this

summer, including *Savages*, which Oliver Stone turned into an exciting film. I have passed on the books to other friends like law professor Anne Bloom who doubles as a surfer girl and Ben Bergman, a former Oxy student, who covers Southern California politics for LA public radio. Winslow's research on the history of Southern California is informative, and his writing is smooth and compelling. Check him out, dude.

The Dewey Decimal System, by Nathan Larson, and the sequel, *The Nervous System*, are inventive riffs on the hard-boiled detective genre. Set in New York City after another devastating terrorist attack, the damaged hero lives in the ruins of the New York Public Library, protecting what remains of the collection while trying to make sense of his friends and enemies outside the library walls. The author is an award winning film composer and the writing is musical, staccato-like, with wonderful punk and hip-hop slang. A great candidate for a Showtime or HBO series.

Holy City, by Guillermo Orsi, is the best crime novel set in Latin America that I have read. The author works as a journalist in Buenos Aires, and knows his city and its corrupt police, politicians and violent criminals. It's not a pretty picture, but it smacks of truth, at least one truth, about life in today's Argentina.

MUSIC

The best album of the year is no contest. All hail Bruce Springsteen and his latest, "Wrecking Ball." New Jersey Governor Chris Christie would agree. He's a big Springsteen fan, and Obama won points by introducing the two of them in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Christie was thrilled. Springsteen's creative energy and political stamina—he keeps stepping up when needed—is a

national resource. It's no coincidence that the Obama campaign chose one of his tracks as its anthem. My favorite "good cause" album of the year is "Chimes of Freedom," produced by my talented daughter Julie Yannatta and her colleague, my Culver City high school classmate, Jeff Ayeroff. The four-CD set celebrates the 50th anniversary of Amnesty International with 80 different singers from Miley Cyrus to Pete Seeger covering Bob Dylan's songbook. Julie produced a two CD version which was sold nationwide in Starbucks. The liner notes are by Princeton historian Sean Wilentz, 'official' historian of the Dylan website and author of a noted book on Dylan. Combine these with CDs of the "Best of the Proclaimers and the Bay City Rollers," and you have a great holiday gift pack.

FILM

Our favorite feature film of the year is *The Intouchables*, starring Omar Sy and Francois Cluzet, which gives new meaning, compassion and humor to the term "buddy movie." If you can see only one foreign film with subtitles, this is certainly the one. It should be nominated for a number of Academy Awards. My favorite documentary of the year is *Marley*, directed by Kevin MacDonald (*Last King of Scotland*) which provides little-known details of Marley's mixed parentage similar to Obama's. Marley's father was a British soldier passing through Jamaica; he lived his early life as a social outcast, and then rose to fame with the Wailers as one of the world's most famous Reggae singers.

I also loved the documentary, *The Other Dream Team*, a moving story of the rise of the Lithuanian basketball team in the aftermath of the end of the Soviet Union. I plan to add it to the play list for my course on Sports, Diplomacy and Globalization. From the BBC,

comes another superb global documentary by world traveling actor and author Michael Palin. In *Brazil With Michael Palin*, he tackles one of the rising BRIC nations, soon to play host to the World Cup and then the Olympics. It is a fun and informative introduction to an up and coming player on the world stage.

My wife Sue and I are partial to BBC and European dramas and order them on line from Amazon UK even before they appear in the US. After seeing the new Bond film in the theater, we ordered *Sword of Honour* starring Daniel Craig; it's a cinematic version of Evelyn Waugh's novel of life and politics in WWII England. Watching it makes clear that Craig's talents as an actor extend well beyond James Bond. The same goes for Benedict Cumberbatch, currently starring in the BBC's modern retelling of Sherlock Holmes' adventures. We watched him play an uptight and agonized hero in "Parade's End," based on the novels of Ford Madox Ford. We also binged on Nordic noir fiction, screening *The Bridge*—a detective thriller which begins with a body cut in half at the mid point of the bridge between Copenhagen and Malmo. A Danish and a Swedish detective must team up to solve the crime.

Borgen (Government), from the makers of the Danish thriller *The Killing*, is a multi-part political thriller about the first female prime minister.

We also are thankful for the Danish firm Lego. Our grandson loves Star Wars-themed Lego sets, and is now moving towards Lego's more educational architecture series. Lego has teamed up with Mattel to provide Barbie construction sets for young girls which are engaging our granddaughter and make us feel less sexist about indulging her passion for dolls. It might be a Barbie fashion shop or a design studio, but at least it involves

building and enterprise. I'm proud of my Danish heritage too.

We wish the Obama family the best of holidays. We salute their courage under fire, and we offer kudos to all those who worked hard in the campaign. Whatever 2013 brings, the past year has ended on a high note for our country. Stay calm, and keep reading Nate Silver.

Holiday Greetings and Happy New Year,

The Ambassadude

The Politics of Permanent Confrontation

February 1, 2013—*The Washington Spectator*

Reviewed: *The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics* by Thomas Byrne Edsall (Anchor Books, 272 pp., \$15.95). The New Year's Day bill that Congress finally passed to avert the "fiscal cliff" prevented a rise in income taxes for most American families, and put off drastic cuts in the federal budget for two months. Although it made permanent the Bush-era tax cuts for all but the top 2 percent of Americans, 151 Republican members of the House, including Majority Leader Eric Cantor and Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy, voted against the compromise measure. And Republicans immediately began threatening to use the debt ceiling debate to hold the federal government hostage. It is unlikely that a sweetly reasoned Grand Bargain will emerge. *The Age of Austerity*, which should be read by anyone wanting to understand the underlying dynamics of the struggle over fiscal issues in Washington, D.C.

For more than two decades, Edsall was the chief political correspondent for the *Washington Post*. He now teaches journalism at Columbia and writes a weekly online column for *The New York Times*. Edsall relies on research, reporting, and fact-based analysis, and his work is informed by a clear-eyed sense of American history, especially the role of race in American society.

In his latest book, Edsall describes how "the politics of austerity" revolves around fights over spending cuts and tax increases in a time of recession and potentially slower growth. He explains:

"The year 2008 marked the emergence of a Democratic Party driven by surging constituencies of minorities, single women

and voters under 30. The flowering of this coalition, manifested in the election of President Obama and continued Democratic control of Congress, was quickly followed by developments affirming the activist, redistributive state: the enactment of a \$787 billion economic stimulus bill, passage of the \$900 billion health care reform act and rising demand for food stamps, unemployment compensation, and Medicaid."

To the Republicans "the newly empowered Democratic Party was determined to institutionalize government expansion through oversight of the financial sector, broadening access to medical care and federally mandated environmental regulation...."

In response, Republicans shifted the focus of American politics to debt and austerity—with a specific attack on means-tested social programs. After winning back control of the House in 2010, they mounted attacks on safety-net spending and the regulation of business. Edsall argues that "the conservative agenda...racializes policy making, calling for deep cuts in programs for the poor. The beneficiaries of these programs are disproportionately black and Hispanic."

"Congressional trench warfare rewards those most willing to risk all," Edsall notes. "Republicans demonstrated this in last summer's debt ceiling fight, deploying the threat of a default on Treasury obligations to force spending cuts. Conservatives are willing to inflict harm on adversaries and more readily see conflicts in zero-sum terms..." This all-or-nothing, anti-poor, anti-minority and anti-government politics is risky, given the changing demographics of the country.

Obama did win reelection by running against the unfairness of the conservative austerity agenda.

Nor is austerity a prescription for national renewal. "If the country needs to invest in education and rebuilding infrastructure..." writes Edsall, "those initiatives are in large part precluded in a political environment that places top priority on deficit and debt reduction. Retrenchment, in effect, becomes a noose, choking off prospects for growth."

Over time, the Republican Party has transformed itself into an angry, reactionary party driven by fear. The change began with Nixon's Southern Strategy, continued through the Reagan years and on to the politics of Bush/Rove and the Tea Party. Better than any other political analyst, Edsall explains this significant development in American politics.

Is bipartisan compromise likely when a majority in the Republican Party considers the president an un-American socialist? The bitter confrontation over the debt ceiling and budget cuts will prove Edsall to be on the mark. It might help if President Obama moved the public debate beyond debt and deficit to inequality and lack of economic opportunity. He could appoint a presidential commission on economic inequality to hold hearings, publicize the facts and offer recommendations to deal with root causes.

The Obama campaign and its allies did a good job combating Republican efforts to suppress voting, and in getting the president's supporters to the polls, but such efforts during a campaign are not enough. Obama might try to combine immigration reform with a national identity card that automatically registers every citizen to vote. Other possible reforms include: making election day a national holiday, providing

same-day voter registration, and expanding early voting.

The country's changing demographics favor the Obama Democratic coalition, if its members register and vote. Texas, for example, could become a blue state sooner than anticipated, greatly diminishing Republican prospects of winning the presidency. It might be that only defeat at the polls will convince the Republican Party to moderate its views, embrace a more diverse America, and understand the vital role government plays in the American economy.

Obama's Second Term: Dead Already or Strategic Awareness?

May 9, 2013—Huffington Post

Is Barack Obama already a lame duck president?

I hope not. It wouldn't be good for the country, and it would certainly disappoint my students who have written policy memos for his second term.

I've just finished teaching a seminar at Occidental on American Grand Strategy (which a few of my friends critical of Obama view as an Oxymoron). I challenged the students to think beyond the obvious issues of the day—the crisis in Syria, gun control legislation, immigration reform, implementation of the health care law—and focus their critical thinking on other challenges which might be game changers in national or global policy.

We began the course by reading *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, a report prepared by the National Intelligence Council, and moved on to the strategic outlook provided by the Atlantic Council's report, *Envisioning 2030: US Strategy for a Post-Western World*, and then to the Brookings Institution's Presidential Briefing Book: *Big Bets and Black Swans: Policy Recommendations for President Obama's Second Term*. I also assigned *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* by Zbigniew Brzezinski. The author of the Atlantic Council report, Banning Garrett from the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, spent an afternoon with the students to discuss global trends and how the Obama administration is responding.

Next, I had them study big topics, reading: *How The World Ends: The Road to Nuclear World War III* by Ron Rosenbaum on nuclear

proliferation; *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Change* by David Orr; *The Freedom Agenda* by James Taub on US foreign policy and democracy promotion; and *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest and the Coming Global Turn* by Charles Kupchan on exercising US power in an increasingly multipolar world.

I asked James Fallows, national correspondent for The Atlantic, to brief students on the politics of presidential second terms, and to offer his analysis of the Obama White House. They then set out to "advise" Obama on how he might make significant political progress in the face of a hostile and recalcitrant Republican opposition and a divided Congress.

The students understood that in coming to power in 2008 Obama had inherited two wars and a global financial meltdown from George Bush, and that the lingering effects of that inheritance are still keenly felt at home and abroad. It became clear to the students that while Presidents can make history, they don't do so in circumstances of their own choosing. I asked them to push the envelope of the possible without being unrealistic or Pollyannish—to suggest ways in which Obama might use out of the box thinking and creative political framing to make significant change in his second four years.

Overall, they did a good job. One team looked at the nuclear issue and fraught US relations with Russia and came up with a proposal for Smart START—a strategy for reducing nonstrategic nuclear weapons and eliminating 'hair trigger' nuclear alerts. Given the recent thaw between Putin and Obama on terrorism because of the tragic events in

Boston, it's possible that Obama might be able to make this issue a major topic of discussion when he holds his next summit with the Russian leader. In a paper on energy policy, a student argued for a carbon tax on power plants combined with a subsidy rebate for development of green technologies which might win over power companies and provide Obama with added political support on the issue of global warming.

On economic policy, student teams proposed a comprehensive program of strategic industrial and resource policy, and tax and corporate reform which might reduce the sky high salaries of corporate executives and offer more transparency to the tax system. In each set of policy proposals, the students included creative ideas for how the Obama team could frame these reforms for public consumption and political advocacy.

The NIC's 2030 report made clear that good and effective US-China relations are a key to global economic and social progress. One student paper analyzed disputes in the South China sea and increasing military assertiveness by the Chinese military, suggesting that President Obama support the Law of the Sea Treaty, and bring it to the Senate for confirmation, framing it around its utility in moving China to a more legal and international based system of dispute resolution. Another foreign policy paper argued for greater White House support for environmental diplomacy between the US and China. On an upcoming trip to China, I will discuss my students' proposals with Chinese university audiences.

My students' work is only one set of examples of ways in which President Obama can make history in his second term—but to do so will require strong leadership, better political messaging from the White House, and more strategic thinking, rather than just responding

to the crises of the day. Of course, it won't be easy. Republicans will oppose him at almost every turn; but he is the President of the United States, and I believe, still has a lot of running room to make change by executive action. On the issue of economic inequality and declining economic opportunity for example, he could appoint a Presidential commission to hold hearings and issue reports on the causes and remedies, shifting public debate from the deficit to fairness and equality. He could ideally appoint Senator Elizabeth Warren to chair, creating a new Warren Commission. On the issue of climate change, he could follow the example of the Australian government which set up a Climate Commission in 2011, chaired by internationally renown scientist Tim Flannery, and establish a similar body in the US to report on the costs of climate change, support public educational events, and explain the merits of carbon pricing. Whatever position he takes on the Keystone pipeline, he could announce such a commission at the same time.

It's important for Obama to try to move the political debate in a more progressive direction. In this way, even when he can't pass legislation he can tee up issues for action in the Clinton administration that might follow. The mid-term elections will be difficult for Obama and for the Democratic Party. The inevitable hiccups in implementing the health care law will be used against him as part of Republicans anti-government attack. Bill and Hillary Clinton will inevitably be among the top party leaders out on the political hustings, fighting to maintain and to increase seats in the Senate and the House.

It's imperative that the amicable feelings and good relations displayed between President Obama and Hillary during the unprecedented joint appearance on *60 Minutes* earlier this year be maintained and strengthened. The

mid-terms will be one test, and then after, when Hillary has made her formal announcement to run for President, the best situation would be for harmonious cooperation between the White House and the Clinton campaign.

Bill Clinton's achievements and legacy suffered because he was not followed in the White House by Al Gore who lost partly because he did not make use of Bill Clinton in his campaign. The Clinton/Gore program Putting People First which we drafted in 1992 envisioned eight years of Clinton and eight years of Gore to get the country back on the right track. More than ever, eight years of Obama followed by eight years of Hillary Clinton are needed to assure nation building at home is a success while strong and sensible American leadership abroad is maintained. A diverse, democratic, thriving America is at stake.

When Obama and Xi Meet, Make It a Green Summit

June 3, 2013—Huffington Post

In preparing for his first summit with China's president Xi Jinping, President Obama might well peruse the detective novel, *Don't Cry, Tai Lake*, by Qiu Xiaolong, a Chinese writer and intellectual who teaches at Washington University in St. Louis. Supposedly on vacation, Shanghai chief police inspector Chen arrives in the resort town of Wuxi only to find the famous Tai Lake polluted by runoff from a local manufacturing plant. The plant director is found murdered and authorities have arrested a local environmental activist. So begins a story which deals with one of China's biggest problems—environmental pollution.

Of course, there are no shortage of weighty issues for Obama and Xi to discuss when they meet at the Sunnylands retreat, the former estate of Ambassador Walter Annenberg, in Rancho Mirage, California on June 7 and 8. They will exchange views on China's growing naval presence in the South China sea, on North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and on cyber warfare and Chinese commercial hacking, but it will not be easy to make significant progress on these issues. Mainly, Obama and Xi will commit to continuing dialogue on them. However, there is one area ripe for cooperative action rather than just talk—environmental diplomacy.

Both countries would gain from an expansion of cooperative green activities. The US and China are the leading emitters of greenhouse gases, and only a joint effort between the two will provide real solutions to global warming. The costs to the US in weird and extreme weather alone are evident in Oklahoma and the Jersey Shore. Pollution is one of the most pressing problems facing Xi and China's ruling elite. Rapid economic growth has come

at the cost of the health and safety of the Chinese people with fouled air, polluted lakes and rivers and poisoned food supplies. Environmental issues are the leading cause of public outcry and demonstrations. The cost to China of environmental damage has been measured in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Xi Jinping has taken to giving speeches about China's Dream and a more "harmonious" society, but this will have little meaning if reality makes the Chinese people sick.

Environmental diplomacy between the US and China does not start from scratch. During the Bush administration, the EPA signed a memorandum of understanding with China's Ministry of Environmental Protection creating a framework for collaboration on air, water, and waste pollution, as well as the implementation of environmental laws. In 2008, a Ten Year Framework for Energy and Environmental Cooperation was signed, and in 2009, Secretary of State Clinton and Energy Secretary Chu signed an agreement with China to expand the Framework and establish a strategic dialogue on climate change. Unfortunately, this early spirit of cooperation did not translate into productive US-China action on climate change at the UN conference in Copenhagen, and neither government has made much of an effort since to highlight common environmental issues.

For the past decade or more, a few US non-profits, operating largely under the media radar, have been collaborating with China on environmental issues. The World Resources Institute has a Climate energy project which partners with Chinese universities. The Climate Works Foundation supports a China Sustainable Energy program. With the

assistance of the Natural Resources Defense Council, China built its first LEED certified building to house its Ministry of Science and Technology. The China Environment Forum at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC, promotes research and dialogue on environmental issues. Occidental College where I teach (and where President Obama studied) has a partnership with Nanjing University on the environment, including the development of common courses and exchange of student and faculty. Other US universities have initiated similar relationships with Chinese counterparts.

A number of US and Chinese companies are engaged in the development and commercialization of green technologies including electric and hybrid cars, solar energy, wind energy and photovoltaic batteries. President Obama said during the 2012 campaign, "As long as countries like China keep going all out on clean energy, so must we." Obama has presented it as a form of friendly competition, but it would not be hard to envision a joint US-China research effort to develop "clean" coal, given the large polluting role that coal burning power plants play in both countries. Common efforts to develop safe nuclear energy might also be on the agenda—and certainly, the US could benefit from the Chinese experience in developing a high speed rail network.

At the Sunnylands summit, Obama and Xi could expand on these existing efforts by announcing a high level US-China Commission on Energy and the Environment, headed by leading private and public figures from both countries, to support greater environmental cooperation. An ambitious agenda for such a group is outlined in "A Road Map for US Cooperation on Energy and Climate Change," a report prepared by the Asia Society and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. My students have also

produced a working paper on US-China environmental diplomacy which I have shared with friends at the National Security Council.

To kick start the work, President Obama might announce green scholarships for Chinese students to attend leading US graduate schools of environmental science. He and President Xi could engage high profile individuals like basketball stars Yao Ming and Jeremy Lin as environmental ambassadors. The two leaders could also pledge to sponsor joint national celebrations of Earth Day in 2014.

Support for great US-China environmental diplomacy could spark an expansion of cooperation at all levels of US and Chinese society. A commitment to common green values might help to assure that neither the Chinese Dream nor the American Dream become ecological nightmares. I'm a realist about summit outcomes, having organized one for Clinton and Yeltsin in Helsinki, but I always hope for some out-of-the-box thinking. Diplomacy is an art as much as it is political science.

Even if Obama and Xi don't seize the moment in Rancho Mirage, I'm guardedly optimistic that my state of California will exhibit leadership in this area. Governor Jerry Brown recently made a well publicized visit to China, taking a ride on the high speed rail train and asking Chinese companies to invest in the solar industry in California. LA's outgoing Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was in China last week on a farewell trade mission. My colleagues in Oxy's Urban and Environmental Policy Institute have been part of the Mayor's brain trust, and assisted him in adopting progressive environmental policies for the city, including taking leadership on a nascent "League of Global Green Cities." Villaraigosa would be a perfect person for Governor Brown to appoint as head of a

California-China commission on energy and the environment.

We should not let disputes over military might, cyber security, or trade overshadow our common interest in a Harmonious Planet.

Even at the individual level, there are ways to up our relationship with China. Our latest family news is that our grandson Viggo has been accepted into the Mandarin Immersion school of the LA Public School District. He will soon add Mandarin to his knowledge of English and Swedish, and perhaps become family translator for future trips to China.

For summer reading, I recommend *Enigma of China*, the latest Inspector Chen novel by Qiu Xiaolong which comes out this month. In fact, there are worse ways to gain a better understanding of contemporary China than by reading the entire series of Chen mysteries. A slightly more sinister view of China is presented in *The Shanghai Factor*, a new thriller by Charles McCarry, a former CIA operative and author of bestselling Cold War era thrillers. To get a handle on the rhetoric about "China's rise," the "China Threat," and "The Beijing Consensus," a serious reader might want to browse *China Goes Global—The Partial Power*, by David Shambaugh, a professor at George Washington University and one of the country's leading China experts. As Shambaugh concludes, "The diversity of views about the implications of China's rise and globalization is testimony to the uncertainty associated with it. But one thing is certain: China's going global will undoubtedly be the most significant development in international relations in the years ahead."

On the lighter side, my wife and I enjoyed viewing the joint US-Chinese film "Shanghai Calling," a romantic comedy about a Chinese-American lawyer (who doesn't speak

Chinese) learning to conduct business the "harmonious" way in current day Shanghai which is fast becoming one of the world's most dynamic cities.

The Ambassadors Abides: Mandela, Obama and the Arc of History

December 17, 2013—Huffington Post

I had just finished a holiday lecture “Can Sports Bring World Peace?” when news of Nelson Mandela’s death was announced. In a fall course on sports and diplomacy at Occidental, I required students to watch the movie *Invictus* which depicts how Mandela as president made a choice to reach out to white South Africans, appealing to their love of rugby and the national team, the Springboks, just as he made a choice to seek reconciliation and inclusion rather than retribution and exclusion when he left Robben Island. It is one of the great moments in sports diplomacy.

Choice matters in politics, as in sports, especially at crucial moments. We don’t get to choose the circumstances of our birth or the terrain—the historical time and place where we live—but we are free to make vital choices about how to live as Mandela certainly did. Diplomatic historian Margaret MacMillan comes down on the side of human agency in her new book, *The War That Ended The Peace*, about the events leading up to WWI. She summarizes her argument in an essay on the Brookings Institution website, writing that the Great War and the drastic consequences that followed were not inevitable, but a result of choices made by political leaders.

President Obama has made choices in his presidency, many with mixed outcomes such as his initial expansion of the war in Afghanistan or his extensive use of drones in Pakistan. In a *New Yorker* (December 16 issue) article, “State of Deception,” journalist Ryan Lizza reports on Obama’s willingness to maintain most of the global surveillance protocols and programs of the Bush administration, choosing to err on the side of

national security over privacy rights. Lizza’s article makes clear that Senator Ron Wyden, the liberal Democratic Senator from Oregon, takes issue with this choice.

On the diplomatic front, President Obama seems to have found his footing in negotiations over nuclear issues with Iran and he seemingly got lucky, at least in the short run, over chemical weapons in Syria. If successful, these diplomatic efforts could lead to greater rapprochement with Iran and perhaps normalization of relations which would be a game changer in the Middle East (which is why princes in Saudi Arabia and right wing politicians in Israel are criticizing Obama’s interim deal over sanctions on Iran). Obama’s polite handshake with Raul Castro at Mandela’s memorial might also hint at a diplomatic initiative with Cuba, clearing away more deadwood of the Cold War. These choices to engage in serious diplomacy might bring achievements which merit Obama the Nobel Peace Prize that he has already been awarded, although on the fraught matter of North Korea, he might want to leave dealing with Kim Jong-un to Dennis Rodman, at least for the holiday season. Rodman is off again to Pyongyang this month to ply his basketball diplomacy.

At Occidental College where Obama studied and engaged in student protests against the Apartheid regime, delivering his first political speech in favor of college divestment from South Africa, students have a mixed and nuanced view of Obama as president. They appreciate his way with words, especially his recent speeches on inequality. They love the fact that he is the first African-American president, and that he formed his political and intellectual identity in the crucible of

classroom and late night debates on the Oxy campus. They want the Affordable Care Act to work, and understand that many Republicans are doing their best to undermine its operation, but they still worry about the way it has been rolled out and they laugh at the Obamacare jokes on The Daily Show and The Colbert Report. They miss the inspirational days of the first history-making campaign, and many of them, especially women students, are waiting for Hillary to return to the political stage.

Whatever the president's flaws and however virulent and hate filled his enemies, he has chosen to stand in the public arena, armed with skills and knowledge gained at Oxy, where ideas and books matter. I smiled at the pictures of Obama on a holiday shopping spree at Politics & Prose, my favorite book store in Washington, DC, indulging his appetite for the printed word by buying dozens of books for friends, relatives and himself. Like Bill Clinton, he is a serious reader although he prefers more literary choices in fiction than Clinton who is partial to detective novels. Both Obama and Clinton, of course, read works of history and biography, especially of former presidents.

Obama's holiday shopping as well as nudging from friends reminded me that I need to post my favorite books of 2013—a tradition that I began when the Huffington Post first started publication. I've already mentioned Margaret MacMillan's history, *The War That Ended The Peace*, and I also highly recommend *Paris 1919*, her history of the peace talks after WWI. Taken together, these books help to explain much of what transpired in world politics in the 20th Century. On US foreign policy during the Cold War, I enjoyed *The Brothers* by Stephen Kinzer, the incredible story of Allen and John Foster Dulles, two brothers who ran the CIA and the State Department and tried to project American

values across the globe while using dubious means. Kinzer, a *New York Times* journalist turned historian, is one of the best chroniclers of the little known underbelly of US foreign policy. Scottish historian William Dalrymple authored *Return of a King*, a magisterial history of British wars in Afghanistan, which reads like a boy's own adventure novel. He also wrote a brilliant online essay for Brookings on the current lessons of war in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Israel is always a fraught topic in American politics. Two new books offer perspectives which encourage readers to rethink knee jerk reactions and to ponder the complexities of history and religion. In his book *Goliath*, a young American Jewish journalist Max Blumenthal provides first hand reporting of the growing strength of right wing groups in Israeli politics. The author spoke at Oxy and engaged students' difficult questions with aplomb. *My Promised Land* by Ari Shavit, a liberal Israeli journalist, is an historical memoir of power and insight, reflecting on the achievements in creating Israel as a Jewish State, yet fearful of its future for many of the reasons which Blumenthal reports.

We also hosted author Russell Shorto to speak at Oxy about his history of Amsterdam as one of the great liberal cities of the world—liberal in the European sense of open to trade, to ideas, and to religious tolerance. I learned something from almost every chapter. Another fall visitor to Oxy, the former Canadian diplomat Robert Fowler, entranced students with a multimedia presentation on his five month captivity by Al-Qaeda in the Sahara. His book about the experience, *A Season in Hell*, is one of the few which provides first hand sketches of the young men who are attracted to Jihadi ways and who have little interest in liberal ideas or the material temptations of the West.

With her new book *The Bully Pulpit*, historian Doris Goodwin has scored another hit, providing a rich, detailed look at the presidency of Teddy Roosevelt and how he used the stage of the White House as well as the rising investigative press (the so-called Muckrakers) to affect social change. It is a book which shows how a man can make choices which change history. I wish Obama would make more effective use of the White House as a pulpit and work with the media rather than investigating reporters about leaks. For a look back at the life of a great American liberal, *The Letters of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.*, edited by his sons Andrew and Stephen Schlesinger, makes instructive reading, especially on the Kennedy years. Obama has made good use of the Kennedy connection by appointing Caroline Kennedy to be ambassador to Japan—an appointment which has been greeted with enthusiasm by the Japanese government and public.

Of the many books on Mandela, a good place to start is journalist John Carlin's *Playing The Enemy* on Mandela's rugby diplomacy, the basis for Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus*, and his wonderful new memoir, *Knowing Mandela: A Personal Portrait*.

For economist and policy wonk friends, there is the important book *The Entrepreneurial State: Rethinking Public vs Private Sector Myths* by Marianna Mazzucato, which documents how most of the technological advances of the past fifty years are linked to government research and development programs. One chapter on Apple demonstrates how every key technology incorporated in the most famous Apple products came from publicly supported research. Conservative attacks on government spending, especially on support for research in science and technology, undercut economic growth rather than promote it.

In detective fiction to which I and Bill Clinton (and many other politico friends) are addicted, the characters also make choices, often bad ones, but they do so in interesting circumstances. 2013 was a good year for new novels by many of my favorite authors: Norwegian Jo Nesbo's *Police*; Scottish Ian Rankin's *Saints of the Shadow Bible*; Chinese professor Qui Xiaolong's *Enigma of China*; Australian Garry Discher's *Bitter Wash Road*; Delhi-based author Tarquin Hall's *The Case of the Love Commandos*; Parker Bilal's *DogStar Rising*, his second novel set in Cairo; Martin Cruz Smith's *Tatiana*, set in Kaliningrad in current day Russia; Sarah Gran's *Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway*, the second in a quirky US-based series; Colin Cotterill's *The Woman Who Wouldn't Die*, set in Laos; James Church's *A Drop of Chinese Blood*, set in North Korea and China; Leighton Gage's *Perfect Hatred*, dealing with corruption and politics in Brazil; and *House of Evidence* by Viktor Arnar Ingolfsson, latest of his Icelandic mysteries. All offer compelling stories set in interesting settings—not unlike a foreign policy briefing which includes criminal behavior. And a few new authors in the genre: *Hour of the Red God* by Richard Crompton, featuring a Maasai detective in contemporary Nairobi, and *The Missing File* by D.A. Mishani, the first in a series with an Israeli police inspector. In the techno-thriller category, Daniel Suarez has a great new book, *Influx*, coming out early in 2014, but you can get started with his earlier works, *Daemon and Freedom*, a two book adventure about the future of the Internet, and *Kill Decision*, the most exciting fictional book on drones you can read.

As we put up our Xmas tree and decorate the house for the holidays, we've been listening to Barbara Streisand's *The Classic Christmas Album*, to James Taylor at Christmas, and to *Sunshine on Leith*, the soundtrack from the film of the same name, a kind of "Scottish

Mama Mia," using songs of the Proclaimers. Few new albums caught my fancy; I am stuck in time (and on the radio dial with Classic 60s). My wife Sue got out a gift from a previous Christmas to play—*Next Stop Is Vietnam: The War on Record*, an incredible 13 CD set of music from 1961-2008.

The CD album which we regularly give as a gift is *Chimes of Freedom: the Songs of Bob Dylan*, recorded by 80 artists in honor of Amnesty International's 50th anniversary, produced by my daughter Julie Yannatta and her mentor, the legendary Jeff Ayeroff. One of Julie's music clients Sarah Bareilles has a new hit pop song "Brave," which has been nominated for a Grammy. It has an appealing feminist/gay rights message as well as a good beat. Our grand daughter Jasmine sings and dances in the music video. We will also be giving as a gift the CD of the soundtrack from *Inside Llewyn Davis*, the new Coen brothers' film about the folk music scene in New York City, loosely based on the life of Dave Van Ronk. The music is arranged by the great T Bone Burnett.

I don't have to promote the music video "What Does the Fox Say"; it has millions of fans including our grandson Viggo who likes to sing and dance to the song. However, I can recommend a less well known music video by Ylvis, the Norwegian duo who created the Fox. It's called "Stonehenge," an amusing take on one of life's big philosophical questions.

Over the Xmas holidays, we will be seeing the biographical film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, starring the talented actor Idris Elba (check out his work in the BBC detective series Luther). It's another homage to Mandela and the choices that he made in life. And we just had our friend Peter Edelman to dinner. He and his wife Marian Wright

Edelman are Mandela-like in their commitment to fighting poverty in the US.

We will be going to my mother Marva Shearer's 95th Birthday dinner dance on December 21. She was an athlete and student leader at Wellesley college in the 1930s, a journalist and editor at film magazines and family editor for *House Beautiful*, and a world traveler with my father, journalist Lloyd Shearer. During WWII, she made the choice to marry a poor Army private rather than a privileged Ivy League grad and headed west with him to live an exciting life. She is planning to hang around to see Hillary inaugurated as our first woman president.

The Ambassador wishes you all the best of holidays. Bask in the glow of Nelson Mandela's departed soul—and make good choices in 2014.

The Silly Season: The Fuss Over Graduation Speakers

May 13, 2014—*Huffington Post*

It's graduation time. The Silly Season has arrived again.

Protesters are claiming scalps, forcing the cancellation of big-name speakers. Condoleeza Rice, former secretary of state, withdrew from speaking at Rutgers commencement in the face of student protest over her role in the Bush administration. Brandeis withdrew its offer to former Dutch legislator Ayaan Hirsi, a vocal critic of Islam. Smith College has just had Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF, withdraw as a speaker because a student group objects.

It's not only left-wing groups that are shutting down speakers. In the past, right-wing groups have nixed invitations to the likes of '60s activist Bill Ayers and gay playwright Tony Kushner. Last year, catholic Providence College withdrew an invitation to John Corvino, a writer and advocate of gay rights.

The thing is: It just doesn't matter, because the students who might be corrupted by these dangerous voices don't listen anyway. I know. I've been there as a graduation speaker and as a recruiter of graduation speakers.

At my graduation from Culver City High School, I gave the valedictory speech. I selected as my theme "Are We Our Brothers Keepers," and spoke gravely about the case of Kitty Genovese, a young woman who was stabbed to death in New York City. Neighbors heard her screams from their apartment windows, but no one rushed to her aid. Eyes glazed over. My classmates and their parents hardly registered a word I spoke. It was a time of celebration—not a time to consider great philosophical issues, moral duties, or how to make the world a better place.

At Occidental College, where I work, I have recruited prominent figures to speak at graduation. One year, I brought Jorge Castaneda, the foreign minister of Mexico. Another year, we had Noor, the Queen of Jordan, and a few years ago, it was Samantha Power, a national security adviser to President Obama and now US ambassador to the UN. The president and the trustees were pleased. A famous person was coming to speak at graduation. The students and their parents couldn't care less. I couldn't find a single student then or now who remembers what any of the speakers said. They vaguely remember that someone "important" showed up. My best choice was Jackson Browne, to whom we gave an honorary degree the same year that Noor spoke, but stupidly, we didn't have him sing.

Academic leaders fret all year long about attracting Big Name speakers for graduation. It's a silly, competitive game, with no purpose other than to show off. It's about institutional prestige, not putting on a celebration for the graduates.

I will concede that there can be amusing graduation speeches. Kurt Vonnegut gave a few, including his famous admonition to always remember to floss (his advice to graduates is collected in *If This Isn't Nice, What Is? Advice to the Young—the Graduation Speeches*), but Vonnegut is the exception that proves the rule. My favorite graduation speaker is a professor who spoke at my children's arts and sciences high school. His glasses kept falling off, he dropped his notes, and then tripped trying to retrieve them. The audience looked embarrassed for him, then finally began to laugh. He was an actor, a parent of a graduate, pretending to

be a graduation speaker. Graduation should be a time of fun and celebration, not a time for deep thought or gratuitous advice from an older generation.

The best graduation event I ever spoke at was at a leading business school in Finland when I served as US ambassador. I was the first non-Finn to be invited to address the graduates of the elite school, and I had prepared serious remarks about the future of the world and their role in it. On the way to the event, I finally read my staff notes which indicated that instead of an address, I would be called to stand on a table and be funny. It was Improv Time.

After the meal and many glasses of Champagne, a chant began: "We want Derek to the table, we want Derek to the table." I was hauled up on to the central dining table, along with my student host, a comely blonde graduate. I told a few on-the-spot jokes about America and Finland, and then congratulated the graduates by saying that while I could not kiss all of them, I would certainly kiss my dinner partner, the blonde MBA student on the table with me. I did (there is a picture to prove it which appeared in the local press). A cheer rang up in the hall. It was my most successful graduation speech.

The Ambassador's iron rule for graduation speakers: sing, recite poetry, tell jokes, dance on tables—never talk about world peace.

Barack Obama and the Chocolate Factory: A Long Good-bye to a Messy 2014

December 15, 2014—Huffington Post

President Obama has a small circle of friends and a sweet tooth. While campaigning in Seattle in 2008, he tried Fran Bigelow's sea salt chocolate caramels. Fran and her family run a small high-quality chocolate factory. She ignited the sea salt chocolate caramel craze in the US, and continues to turn out the finest chocolate made in America.

The Obama White House contacted Fran's and asked the company to produce a special run of sea salt chocolate caramels in a blue box with the Presidential seal. Obama offers them to overnight guests and to friends who come to dinner. Fran was recently at the White House for a food event, and the President kept asking, "Where's Fran?" and then found her, giving her a big hug. Fran is an FOB—Friend of Barack.

Fran recounted this story while she gave us a tour of her new factory, when my wife and I spent my birthday weekend in Seattle. Located in an old brick building which once housed the Seattle Malt and Brewing Co, the expanded production facilities include a bright, airy tasting room and retail chocolate shop. The conversation reminded me that President Obama does have friends, albeit a small circle compared to Bill Clinton. He is not as cold and distant as many critics and political enemies like to suggest.

This fall, one of his Occidental college classmates, Kofi Manu, who had returned to teach in his native Ghana, died suddenly. I was informed because Oxy students of mine had worked with Manu while studying abroad, so I let the White House know. The President's closest adviser, Valerie Jarrett,

replied immediately, asking for details because the president wanted to send a personal message to Kofi's family.

After the tour, we checked into a hotel near Pike Place market and headed to the Seattle Rep for the premiere of *The Great Society*, the second in a cycle of plays about President Lyndon Johnson. Earlier this year, we had seen Bryan Cranston portray LBJ on Broadway in *All The Way*, which dramatizes the passage of the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act and celebrates Johnson's mastery of Congressional politics (the play and the actor won Tony Awards).

Obama has frequently been compared unfavorably with Johnson. The usual litany is that LBJ was a master networker and manipulator of people, and that's why he could pass progressive legislation—not only two civil rights bills, but Medicare and Medicaid, environmental legislation, and bills supporting aid to education and to the humanities, as well as funding for a public broadcasting system. Obama is supposedly a cold fish who can't get much done with Congress because of a lack of people skills.

The argument is badly ahistorical. LBJ had liberal Republicans to whom he could appeal to do what was right for the country, and conservative Democrats whom he could induce using patronage to support his legislative agenda. Obama has neither to work with, and has faced obstruction from a reactionary Republican party from his first days in office. That he has passed financial reform, an expansion of medical care, and

strengthened environmental protection is impressive.

Tragically, the second play ends with LBJ destroyed by his support for the Vietnam War; Nixon is elected on a law and order ticket and his "secret" plan for peace. Along the way, MLK and RFK are assassinated, and the promise of the civil rights revolution collides with de facto segregation in the North. Johnson inherited a war in Southeast Asia, but couldn't bring himself to end it.

Here is a more appropriate comparison. Obama inherited war and he is still trying to end US military involvement in two conflicts. Like LBJ, he has bought into many of the arguments of the National Security establishment about how to conduct foreign policy. The war in Afghanistan, the longest US overseas conflict, has cost almost a trillion dollars with billions more to be spent. Almost 80 percent of the spending has come under the Obama administration. The war in Iraq has cost the US another trillion dollars, created millions of refugees, and led to the rise of ISIS.

The challenging events of 2014 for Obama—Putin's seizure of Crimea and his destabilization of eastern Ukraine, China's assertiveness with neighbors in Asia, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the Ebola crisis in Africa, nuclear negotiations with Iran, illegal immigration from Latin America, as well as ongoing climate change and racial unrest at home—take place in a hyper-globalized environment. Unlike the Cold War, there are no clear black and white demarcations, not even an alternative ideology against which to define America (Jihadism is a reaction to globalization and modernization, not a coherent ideology). As daily events unfold, the 'whole world is watching,' Tweeting, posting on Facebook, and sharing on YouTube. Even ghastly events like beheadings are up on the web, or Sony's

internal emails because they made a stupid movie on North Korea. It feels anarchistic, as if events are in control, not us. The world continues to be organized as nation states, some failing, yet most problems transcend oceans and borders; the UN is not a world government, and there have been no alien attacks or diplomatic visits to unite the peoples of the Earth.

The US is expected to lead, but is often vilified when we act abroad. Rising nations, especially China, Russia, India and Brazil, seek increased influence; their leaders are not Obama's partners. In these fraught circumstances, how does the President help to build a more peaceful and sustainable global community?

For the mid-term exam in a fall course on soft power—how nations attract and interact without war—I asked students to evaluate Obama's presidency and how he has affected American influence abroad. Most pointed out that while Obama's election—and his Nobel Peace prize simply for being elected—started out his presidency on a high note and brought US global approval ratings up from their nadir under Bush, Obama's support of NSA spying, the expanded use of drone warfare, and his muddled policies in the Middle East have not been positives. He has tried not to do "stupid stuff," but has frequently not offered a clear and sustained narrative about what he is doing and why.

For example, Obama says he is against torture, but his unwillingness to side with Senators Feinstein and McCain in praising release of the Senate report on the CIA's use of enhanced interrogation techniques or to hold accountable his own CIA director John Brennan is disappointing and reflects badly on the country and on his own presidency.

His singular diplomatic achievement could be a nuclear deal with Iran, but it's likely than any

agreement would be opposed and undercut by conservatives in both countries.

When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping, especially at the holidays. Like Bill Clinton, the president is a reader and a book buyer. He recently went holiday shopping at Politics and Prose in northwest DC, and left the store with a bag of books. This week, I'm giving an end of the year review talk to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. In addition to covering the global news stories of 2014, I will recommend a few of my favorite books on global affairs including these:

Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth and Faith in the New China, by Evan Osnos. Brilliant reporting by a former *New Yorker* correspondent in Beijing. If you can read only one book on China, this is the one.

Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival, by David Pilling, the Financial Times man in Asia. His column in the FT provides the best coverage on Japanese politics and economics.

Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil Through Soccer, and *The Game of Our Lives: The English Premier League and the Making of Modern Britain*, both by David Goldblatt. The globalization of sports, especially soccer, has made sport an interesting and important form of Soft Power.

A Strange Kind of Paradise: India Through Foreign Eyes, by Sam Miller. A wonderful mix of history, travelogue, and memoir by a talented BBC reporter and observer of India.

Thirteen Days in September, by Lawrence Wright. The story of President Carter's peace negotiations with Sadat and Begin at Camp David, an almost hour by hour account of how diplomacy can make a difference.

Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East, by Scott Anderson. The best book I know for understanding how the modern Middle East came into being, and how the problems created by colonialism still plague us.

The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914, by Margaret MacMillan, on events leading up to WWI. I also recommend her book on the peace talks that set the stage for another war—Paris 1919.

PetroState: Putin's Power and the New Russia, by economist Marshall Goldman and *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*, by Peter Pomerantsev, a British TV producer who worked in Moscow. These two books explain how Putin gained and holds power.

I also have an appetite (addiction) for detective fiction set in foreign countries, believing (or convincing myself) that such situated novels can inform readers about different cultures and politics. A few of my best reads from the past year:

A Cut-Like Wound, by Anita Nair, set in Mumbai; *The Prisoner*, by Omar Shaid Hamid who served with the Karachi police, a depiction of politics and police work in Pakistan; *The Ways of Evil Men*, a Mario Silva investigation set in Brazil by Leighton Gage, who died this year; *Beams Falling*, by P.M. Newton, second in a series by a former Sydney police detective featuring a Vietnamese-Australian officer; *Strange Shores*, by Icelandic author Arnaldur Indridason, that ends a series with police inspector Erlendur investigating his own past; *The Iron Sickle*, by Martin Limon, set in South Korea involving a cover up of war crimes from the Korean War; *Cobra*, by Deon Meyer, latest in a series set in Cape Town featuring Afrikaans homicide detective Bennie Griessel;

Europe in Autumn, by David Hutchinson, set in a future Europe fragmented into mini-states.

On the documentary front, my favorites: *Red Army*, directed by Gabe Polsky, a former Yale hockey player, on the rise and fall of the Soviet Union's national team during the Cold War, and

Last Days in Vietnam, directed by Rory Kennedy, which we will show students at Oxy in the spring as part of a conference on the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

It's been a messy world in 2014. Human beings do terrible things to one another, yet are capable of acts of kindness, sacrifice and love. One wishes for clearer sailing in the coming year, especially for the use of smarter power (hard and soft more in sync) by President Obama.

Holiday Greetings to one and all.

~ The Ambasadude

PS: My wife Sue (and our dogs Nick and Nora) have reminded me of a little good news as the year ends. Pope Francis has suggested that all good dogs might go to Heaven. For the man with one of the most popular Twitter accounts on the globe, this is no small commitment.

More Breaking News: a few days after I finished this article, President Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced intentions to normalize diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba. Apparently, secret talks between the US and Cuba were hosted by Canada, encouraged and assisted by Pope Francis. This is an historic diplomatic achievement for President Obama with interesting repercussions for the 2016 Presidential race by removing the Cuban issue from Florida politics and very important

outcomes for Major League Baseball. Soon, Cuban ballplayers like Yasiel Puig of the LA Dodgers won't have to flee the country to sign with MLB teams. There might even be an MLB expansion team for Havana in the future (something I proposed twenty-five years ago in an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times). This is a good note to end the year on. Kudos to President Obama for an historic achievement. Now, he merits his Nobel Peace Prize.

All Hail Music Diplomacy: B.B. King Departs The Global Stage

May 18, 2015—*Huffington Post*

Legendary blues guitarist and singer B.B. King died last week. He was a global ambassador for American culture. King performed in Russia, China and Europe, and while in his 80s, he was still playing concerts in Denmark, Germany and France. He was an embodiment of American Soft Power, expressing the vitality and spirit of a diverse nation.

I first heard B.B. King play the blues in the 1960s in a bar in Washington, DC, packed with a racially mixed audience, a rarity in those days. I became a fan and admirer of his talent and his work ethic. Decades later while serving as US ambassador to Finland in the Clinton administration, I got to meet King when he performed at the summer Pori Jazz festival which attracts worldwide musical talent.

Before his performance, I sat with King in his trailer. I expressed my admiration for his career, and asked him if he had ever been to the White House. "No, sir," he replied, "But I'd surely like to." He gave me "Lucille" guitar picks as a souvenir and asked me to give his regards to President Clinton. I sent the White House a report about the meeting, and included a personal note for the President. Later that year, Clinton included B.B. King as a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors. President Obama would later invite King to perform at a blues concert in the White House where the two of them sang a duet of Sweet Home Chicago.

During my diplomatic time in Finland, I saw first hand the power of American music to stir foreign audiences. Other singers who performed in Finland included Wilson Pickett, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and James Brown. I

stood on the running board of the white Rolls Royce that Brown—the King of Soul—required for concert appearances while he leaned out and gave me religious and political advice for his fellow Baptist, Bill Clinton. I welcomed Cash and his wife June Carter, and Cash kindly dedicated a song to me in public before a sold out crowd in a hockey arena. I presented an achievement award to Tina Turner, then watched her run up and down the steps of Helsinki's Olympic Stadium singing and dancing, thrilling the Finns. When a friend from Los Angeles, folk rock singer Jackson Browne came to Helsinki, I hosted him at the ambassador's residence and took my family to his concert, where he gave a shout out to his fellow Californian.

Music diplomacy was not a one way street. I paid a courtesy visit to Helsinki's only rock n' roll themed McDonald's, run by a Finnish group called The Leningrad Cowboys, a band of entrepreneurial musicians with a sense of humor (the joke of the band's name was that they had come to Finland from Russia). To celebrate the end of the Cold War, the band invited the Red Army Chorus to play a joint concert in downtown Helsinki's Senate Square, and advertised the event with posters saying, "The Russians Are Coming." They also starred in a strange road movie, *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*, directed by the Finnish director Aris Kaurismaki. The band agreed to play at my 50th birthday party, and in front of guests including Finland's Prime Minister, I was made an honorary member of the Leningrad Cowboys and presented with a trophy calling me "the Ambassadors," (a moniker I've happily used ever since).

During the Cold War, the US State Department recognized the power of music

and sent jazz greats such as Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Benny Goodman on concert tours behind the Iron Curtain (for details, see: *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, by Penny Von Eschen, or *Jazz Diplomacy*, by Lisa Davenport). Bruce Springsteen played a famous concert in East Berlin in 1988 before the Wall came down, a story told in *Rocking The Wall. Bruce Springsteen: The Berlin Concert That Changed the World* by Erik Kirschbaum. While on a student trip to the Soviet Union in the 60s, I recognized that rock n' roll was a subversive force in a repressive society. My classic rock albums were gold currency which I traded with Russian students. Jazz, the Blues, folk music and rock n' roll all speak to the diversity of the American experience and are inherently democratic musical forms.

Of course, it's not only these popular genres which make for music diplomacy. Finland is known for its famous classical composers and contemporary world class conductors. While I was abroad, Finnish conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen became head of the Los Angeles Philharmonic to much acclaim. He brought the LA orchestra to play in Helsinki, and I hosted a post-concert dinner for the entire LA Phil (including accompanying spouses and partners), and invited Finnish classical musicians to join in a summer outdoor meal. I also attended performances of the classic American opera *Porgy and Bess*, and modern operatic offerings by composer John Adams whose producer Peter Sellars came to Helsinki with the show "I Was Looking at Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky."

The power of music is universal. Music diplomacy is not just an American tool of statecraft. Musicians from South Africa jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela and singer Miriam Makeba played an important role in winning international support against the Apartheid

regime. Folk singers from Chile rallied international opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship, and the songs of Bob Marley have been an inspiration for freedom movements around the world. Occidental graduate Gay Carawan who died this month revived and popularized the hymn *We Shall Overcome* which became a civil rights anthem and an international song of freedom. *Amandla: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*, the award winning documentary directed by my Oxy colleague Sherry Simpson Dean tells the role that music played in bolstering Mandela and the ANC's liberation movement.

Music continues to bring down international barriers.

Pop star Michael Jackson was an international icon with a global fan base. In 2003, former Beatle Sir Paul McCartney famously played in Moscow's Red Square. Russian President Vladimir Putin gave Sir Paul a personally guided tour of the Kremlin and attended the concert. The Gangnam Style music video by South Korean pop star Psy became the first YouTube video to reach one billion views. By the end of 2012, the song had topped the pop charts in more than thirty countries including Australia, Canada, Russia and the UK. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hailed it as a "force for world peace," and President Obama praised the song in his White House meeting with the South Korean President. One of the most popular American rock groups in China is The Eagles. Their 2011 concerts in Shanghai and Beijing were sell outs, and the band's signature song *Hotel California* created a mini-boom in like named hotels.

American musician Ry Cooder collaborated with Cuban musicians to produce the awarding winning album, *The Buena Vista Social Club*. This past weekend, the Minnesota Orchestra played to a sold out

crowd at the Teatro Nacional in Havana, the first American orchestra to make a concert tour in Cuba after President Obama announced the opening of normalized relations. The conductor of the orchestra, Osmo Vanska, is Finnish.

Of course, music can't solve all of the world's troubles and there's no doubt that the Islamic State won't be won over by Western tunes—but music diplomacy should be a tool of every country's statecraft.

War and Peace in a Jittery Nation: Obama's Last Year and After

December 17, 2015—*Huffington Post*

America is a jittery nation this holiday season.

It's not easy to remain cool and calm let alone joyful in the face of media reports of attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, shootings at schools and medical facilities, or videos of police encounters in American cities.

Our daily life was disrupted this week when a bomb threat closed Los Angeles public schools and our eight-year-old grandson Viggo, who lives with us, suddenly couldn't go to school. We took him to a holiday bake and art sale at Occidental College run by an artist friend and let him pick out a print for his room—but, along the way, we had to explain why his school had been closed. The next morning as part of our daily ritual, Viggo and I ate breakfast and watched the morning news. We heard Governor Chris Christie say that we were in World War III. Viggo and I agreed that Christie is a big doofus. Even an eight-year-old knows that this rhetoric is a ridiculous over stretch.

The Republican Presidential race is unhinged by international events, as well as by President Obama's staying power. None is a credible leader for the nation. The only candidate who has offered a robust, nuanced and thoughtful strategy for dealing with ISIS is Hillary Clinton, but whether she might actually become Commander-in-Chief we won't know until next November's election. Barack Obama is president for one more year. He has responded calmly to the rush of recent events, and not let calls for World War stampede him into hasty moves.

For a man who receive the Nobel Peace Prize in his first year in office, Obama has had to spend a lot of his time deciding on military

actions. Given the strategic mess that he inherited from George Bush, he didn't have the best of options. While he has made mistakes and missed a few opportunities, overall Obama has performed well as Commander-in-Chief. His diplomatic initiatives with Cuba and Iran this past year, certainly justify the Nobel committee's award. He leaves his successor in position to expand the potential of both openings.

Obama has also made good on his commitment to lead on climate change. The recent Paris agreement, while by no means perfect or legally enforceable, would not have happened without Obama's engagement of China and her leader Xi Jin-Ping. The challenge of dealing with China on environmental issues, as well as more fraught military and economic matters will, of course, be passed to the next president, as will engaging and resisting Russia's President for Life, Vladimir Putin. Obama might find a way to work a short term deal with Putin allowing a truce in the Syrian civil war, but whatever transpires, Putin's aggressive nationalism on other fronts will not disappear. He will be in Moscow for the next president to face.

For now, the focus in Washington, DC, and in presidential politics is on ISIS. I have national security friends going to conferences and meetings, intent on producing the ideal political-military strategy that will eradicate the self-declared Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. To think clearly about plans more sophisticated than Ted Cruz' call for carpet bombing, requires actually understanding where ISIS came from, its appeal and base of support, and most importantly, what not to do that would play into its or other terrorist groups' narratives. I'm hoping that President

Obama, in the holiday mode of bipartisanship, might send Republicans a few gift books about ISIS and terrorism.

Here are my recommendations:

What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat, by Louise Richardson, a former Harvard scholar and now head of St. Andrews University (and soon to be first woman head of Oxford University). This is a calm, clear headed analysis of terrorist groups and terrorist methods, looking at historical examples from the West as well as from the Middle East.

Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalization, by Reza Aslan, an American Muslim religious scholar and best selling author of *Zealot*, a *Life of Jesus*, who is a professor at UC Riverside. Aslan's book focuses on the Islamic world, and offers the good advice on how to fight a cosmic war: don't.

Black Flag: The Rise of ISIS, by Washington Post correspondent Joby Warrick, a riveting account of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the architect of ISIS's strategy, born in the ruins of Iraq after the American invasion. Essential reading for understanding what we are facing in Syria and Iraq.

Any serious strategy for eradicating ISIS requires dealing with the Syrian civil war, and like it or not, Russia, a long time patron of the Assad family regime, is a player in that game. *The New Czar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, by Steven Lee Myers, former *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, is the best guide to understanding the rise and transformation of Vladimir Putin from a minor KGB bureaucrat to the nationalist leader of Russia. Opportunities to forge a working relationship with Putin were badly missed

during the Bush administration. The task is much more difficult now, as Myers and current events show—but Putin is the head of a major nuclear and Eurasian land power, and must be part of diplomatic solutions while remaining an irritating presence for the next President.

China too remains a challenge, even more so than Russia, because our economies are more integrated. The Port in Los Angeles where I live is the largest importer of goods from China. My grandson Viggo is studying in Chinese half the day in LAUSD's Mandarin immersion program. I recently hosted a visit to Oxy by the Chinese consul general where our largest number of foreign students are now from mainland China. Hollywood and the NBA keep expanding operations in China.

The next president cannot shy away from engaging the country.

A good primer for understanding contemporary China is Qiu Xiaolong's new novel, *Shanghai Redemption*, as well as his previous book in the *Inspector Chen* series, *Enigma of China*. In fact, I recommend as a gift pack the complete set of Qiu Xiaolong's detective series set in and around Shanghai. He deals with all of the vital issues in contemporary China ranging from corruption to censorship of the Internet to environmental pollution. The best non-fiction report on today's China is *Age of Ambition* by Evan Osnos, the former *New Yorker* correspondent in Beijing, which won the National Book Award last year. For historical perspective on US-China relations, my favorite book of the past year is *China 1945: Mao's Revolution and America's Fateful Choice*, by Richard Bernstein, a former *New York Times* Asia correspondent, who offers an insightful and well reported narrative of how America's temporary WWII alliance with Mao's

movement led to years of non-recognition and hostility.

Like other elite colleges this year, Occidental saw a burst of student activism around issues of race, identity and diversity. It's hard not to be sympathetic with black students' concerns while not always agreeing with their tactics or their proposals for change.

However, to put some of the issues of micro-aggression in political perspective, I've been recommending to students, faculty and administrators that they read the brilliantly reported *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America*, by Jill Leovy, a *Los Angeles Times* crime reporter who describes and analyzes the violent deaths of black men in American cities. It's a sobering book that offers no easy solutions to our "exceptional" heritage of racial segregation and separation.

It might be fitting for the next president to ask former President Obama to head a national commission of inquiry into race, violence and life in American cities.

Other non-fiction works of the past year that I've enjoyed and feel are helpful for understanding our jittery world include: *The Full Catastrophe: Travels Among the New Greek Ruins*, by James Angelos, former *Wall Street Journal* reporter, on the travails of Greece and the EU; *Dancing With The Devil in the City of God—Rio de Janeiro on the Brink*, by Juliana Barbassa, former AP bureau chief in Rio, a brilliant narrative of the good, bad and ugly aspects of a dynamic global city which will host the Olympics next year; *Circus Maximus*, by sports economist Andrew Zimbalist, an *Economist* Book of the Year, on the pros and cons of hosting a mega-sporting event such as the Olympics or the World Cup (I required this book in my course this fall on Sports, Diplomacy and Globalization); and *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War*, by Don

Doyle, a professor of history, on the "public diplomacy" surrounding the Civil War, and how Lincoln's and the Union's actions to combat slavery reverberated around the world.

In a class by itself, and the perfect "stocking stuffer" for any sports or political enthusiast is the picture and text book, *The Audacity of Hoop: Basketball and the Age of Obama*, by *Sports Illustrated* correspondent Alexander Wolff. More than any other recent president, Barack Obama has embraced a major American sport—basketball—as a player and as a fan. This book is an exploration of the sports journey of Barack Obama, and of the role of sports in national politics.

As always, I temper my non-fiction and work related reading with a search for compelling international mysteries where I can be entertained and informed. In addition to reading Qiu Xiaolong's latest, *Shanghai Redemption*, I enjoyed discovering *Smaller and Smaller Circles*, by F.H. Batacan, winner of the Philippine national book award, a story of a Jesuit priest detective investigating a serial killer in the slums of Manila's Quezon City; *Jade Dragon Mountain*, by Elsa Hart, an historical detective novel set in 18th Century China during the time of the Kang Xi emperor—elegantly written and well researched, it reminded me of the joys of my university course in Chinese history taught by Jonathan Spence, an expert on the period; *Dictator*, by Robert Harris, the last in the trilogy of historical thrillers about the Roman legislator and orator Cicero and the fall of the Roman Republic (the previous volumes are *Imperium* and *Lustrum*).

I also have a passion for future history (okay, sci-fi); I find it useful to speculate on where political economic trends might lead us when my grandkids are grown or even my age. This year brought entertaining books by masters

of the genre including Ian McDonald's *Luna: New Moon*, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*, and Dave Hutchinson's *Europe At Midnight*, the continuing story of Europe broken into mini-states which he began in *Europe in Autumn*.

Next year will bring the presidential election and more good reading to inform us of the joys and perils of American exceptionalism. Princeton historian Sean Wilentz will bring out his collected political essays, and author Sidney Blumenthal will publish the first volume of his highly anticipated study of Lincoln as a politician. Former Army colonel Andrew Bacevich will publish a study of American military involvement in the modern Middle East. In a blast from the past, Routledge Revivals will reissue in hard cover and e-book *Economic Democracy: The Challenge of the 1980s*, co-authored by Stanford economist Martin Carnoy and myself. Before Bernie Sanders was speaking about inequality on the Senate floor or

running for president as an economic populist, Martin and I were trying to analyze the workings of the American economy and options for reforming it. We got many things wrong including not anticipating the rise of Chinese economy, the spread of the Internet or the end of the Cold War, but we were right about the Reagan attack on unions and public interest organizations, growing corporate support for rolling back the federal social safety net, and the shift in the Republican party towards a largely white, conservative, Southern-based party.

Enough of the heavy stuff. I wish everyone a warm holiday season, including the president and his family when they are eating snow cones in Hawaii.

Go see the new *Star Wars* movie and worry about conflict in galaxies far, far away from ours—and don't let Donald Trump or ISIS spoil your holidays.

A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall: Obama Exits and Trump Takes Center Stage

December 12, 2016—Huffington Post

After the election, I spoke to a group of thirteen year old Boy Scouts as credit for their merit badge in Global Citizenship. I urged them to complete the requirements before President Trump changed the badge to one for American Nationalism. Having followed the campaign on the Internet, the scouts wanted to know whether the Clinton Foundation had paid for Chelsea Clinton's wedding, and if there was a warrant out for Hillary Clinton's arrest.

At Occidental College, I moderated a post-election panel for an overflow crowd of worried students and staff. I also analyzed the election results at a luncheon for the consul generals in Los Angeles. I was analytical and diplomatic at these events, explaining that it was an election not a coup d'état or a revolution, and that America's federal system of government is strong.

That's true, but it's wrong to be Polyanish about the Trump presidency. Al Gore visiting Trump Tower to discuss climate change with the president-elect is a fool's errand. Trump telling the press that he likes Obama and welcomes his advice is a con. There is little doubt that the election has brought a very conservative Republican administration to power in Washington, D.C. Trump's outlandish style of social media communication and raucous victory rallies might seem populist, but serve a right wing policy agenda that will be pushed by conservative appointees and a conservative Republican Congress.

Vigilance is required, not wishful thinking. The Trump Show is reality and will run for the next four years.

During the campaign season, I spoke to university, business and government audiences in Europe, New Zealand, Canada and China, as well as around the US I argued that this was the first American election in which globalization and its discontents played a defining role. Trump offered a right wing populist narrative—attacking global elites, scapegoating minorities and immigrants, and promising punitive tariffs, a wall on the Mexico border, locking up opponents, and winking at far right conspiracy theories. His language was coarse and emotional; he stayed on a simple message—Make America Great Again.

In the Democratic primary, self-declared socialist Bernie Sanders offered a left wing populist story—blaming Wall Street, calling for a people's revolution, and championing expanded government programs in health, education, and business regulation. His message excited disaffected 60s liberals and millennial voters, but could not mobilize the minority base of the party.

Hillary Clinton had a less clear narrative and a more nuanced message. She ran on her record of service—her identity as former First Lady, US Senator, and Secretary of State; she was competent and experienced. Of necessity, she tied herself to the incumbent President Obama whom she served, and whose diverse coalition of upper income liberals, women, minorities, and gays she inherited. For much of the campaign, it looked as if this coalition which had produced victory twice for Barack Obama would elect Hillary Clinton the first woman president.

There were obvious perils for the Obama/Clinton coalition. Sexism was an unknown

factor. Viewing the presidency as a man's job, many men might not vote for a woman. It was erroneously assumed that more women would vote for Hillary than had voted for Obama. However, ideology transcended gender. Hillary got a majority of women voters, especially of minority women, but not a significant number of additional Republican or independent female voters. In addition, some working class men who'd voted for Obama did not want to vote for a woman—and many of these same white working class men in mid-western swing states felt alienated by the Democratic Party's failure to improve their economic prospects and those of their children.

Unlike 1992 when Bill Clinton campaigned on a program of Putting People First focusing on the economy, there was no overarching economic message from Hillary Clinton's campaign. Her team produced a detailed program book, *Stronger Together*; her economic platform was endorsed by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and a host of progressive economists. The problem wasn't the program, but that it got lost in the flack over Benghazi, the State Department emails, and the activities of the Clinton Foundation. Russian hackers contributed to the cacophony, providing Wikileaks with emails from the Democratic National Committee and the account of John Podesta, the Clinton campaign chairman. The Trump campaign aggressively exploited these issues to drown out Mrs. Clinton's programmatic message. Mass media coverage focused on both candidates' negatives, but this reporting hurt Hillary more because Trump voters were ready to excuse his boorish behavior. In addition, serious reporting was overrun by fake news, wild rumors, and conspiracy charges. The Boy Scouts and millions of others were not immune to this degraded campaign coverage.

Still, it was a close election. Had not FBI Director James Comey intervened in the final ten days, Hillary might have won both the electoral and the popular vote. Another reason it was a close election is that President Obama missed an historic opportunity to revive the Democratic Party's New Deal tradition and rebuild support among the working class. Obama deserves credit for pulling the country out of the worst economic downturn since the Depression, but he could have done much more than stabilize the economy. Instead of following James Carville's advice to "jail a few bankers," he appointed Wall Street veterans to key economic posts and steered a centrist course; few progressive economic thinkers were included in his administration.

White House messaging on his major initiatives was tepid. He took little credit for the public money he spent, and let Republicans effectively demonize his health care initiative as evil Obamacare. Unlike FDR's New Deal, the accomplishments of the stimulus package went unbranded, allowing Tea Party Republicans to characterize Obama's economic recovery package as a bailout of Wall Street. To many working class voters, especially whites, it appeared that black lives or gays right to marry mattered more to the president, to the Democrats, and to Hillary, than working class livelihoods. The Trump campaign exploited this perception.

Given Trump's hard right conservative team, his world wide business interests, and the influence that lobbyists and Wall Street billionaires will exert, it is a safe bet that there will be scandals. There will also be push back from communities and groups affected by the Trump administration's policies. Democratic politicians on both coasts and in major cities will defend minorities and immigrants. Senators Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, Sherrod Brown, Kamala Harris and others will

call out Trump's hypocrisy. It will not be a peaceful time.

America's soft power—a nation's image abroad and the ability to influence by civic and cultural example—took a big hit in the election. If the world could have voted, Mrs. Clinton would easily have been elected. Instead, Trump's victory encourages right wing nationalist groups in Europe and Asia.

Most likely, Trump's foreign policy message to the world will be one of America First economics, increased military spending, an expanded war on Islam, conflict with Iran, accommodation of Putin's Russia, with reliance on military responses to international conflict—perhaps, in the South China Sea. Given his choice of former military leaders for key national security positions, diplomacy will not be the watchword. Conduct of American foreign policy via Twitter will be scary.

President Obama should not go quietly into post presidency memoir writing and speech giving. He is still president for more than a month, and he should speak out much as departing President Dwight Eisenhower warned of the military-industrial complex. He should preserve the Senate's full report on torture, and discuss at a press conference the findings of the White House study on Russia hacking. As former president, I hope that he will remain engaged in issues of race. An important book—*The Color of Law*, by Richard Rothstein—on how the US made segregation a legal reality will be out in the spring and cause a stir. Next year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Kerner Commission which recognized the separate and unequal realities of black and white America. Foundations or wealthy individuals might fund the Obama Commission on Racial Equality, if he is willing to devote time to the task.

On the international front, we will need Justin Trudeau of Canada and Angela Merkel of Germany to play strong leadership roles and not leave the global stage to Trump, Xi and Putin. The new secretary general of the UN, Antonio Guterres, former prime minister of Portugal, will have his work cut out for him to convince Trump's foreign policy team that the UN matters.

In the past, I've included a list of favorite books in my year end piece, but I'm skipping that this year. My faith in the value of rational communication—in facts and the lessons of history has been shaken by Trump's success and what it means for the country. Many of my friends' terrific non-fiction books on Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, the Spanish Civil War, US -China relations, US -Iran negotiations, and other worthy subjects were published this year. Reading them provided a bit of solace—but the most relevant books I read were science fiction: *Europe in Winter* by David Hutchinson which posits a future Europe divided into mini-nationalist states, and Ben H. Waters' disturbing novel *Underground Airlines* which depicts an America where slavery is still legal in southern states and runaway slaves get returned by the North.

I skipped having a birthday party this month, not feeling in a celebratory mood. Instead, my wife and I had lunch at the beach, then caught an early movie (at senior rates), followed by Mexican food with our daughter and grandson. We saw *Arrival* in which the sudden appearance of alien ships in numerous countries highlights the issue of cooperation versus military response. The ability of an American woman scientist to speak Chinese and be able to call China's military leader plays a pivotal role in the plot. I doubt that aliens will arrive during the Trump administration to bring us together across national boundaries. At least, my

grandson Viggo is learning to speak Chinese in a mandarin immersion program in the L.A. schools. He also plays hockey on weekends. Our granddaughter Jasmine scored a career high fifteen points for her school basketball team this week. Both grand kids are at home in the diverse social ecology of greater Los Angeles. I assure their parents that living in a state in the West Coast Liberated Zone is a good place to ride out the coming storm.

To lift our spirits, my wife Sue has already put up Christmas decorations. Over the holidays, we will watch our favorite feel good movies like *Love Actually*, *About A Boy*, *The Zero Effect* and *Aloha*. In honor of Bob Dylan's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature (even if he didn't show up to receive it, Patti Smith sang "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" at the ceremony), we are playing his classic holiday album, *Christmas in the Heart*, and fortifying ourselves for the hard rain that's coming.

US Soft Power Triumphs In Probe of Sepp Blatter's Corrupt Casino

May 30, 2015—*The Conversation*

Soccer is truly the world's sport. It is played and watched by more people across the globe than any other sport.

Every four years, it is the center of global attention when the World Cup is held. It's as if the World Series and Super Bowl were rolled into one mega-sporting event with viewership in the hundreds of millions.

A private organization based in Switzerland called FIFA controls the selection of the host country, the commercial sponsors for the event and the rules by which the matches are played. In other words, FIFA has monopoly control over this massive global event.

For decades, many fans and players, including leading professional soccer stars, have considered FIFA to be a deeply corrupt organization. Now the US, itself not a leading soccer nation, has challenged FIFA's position as global arbiter of the sport by indicting leading soccer officials.

"These individuals and organizations engaged in bribery to decide who would televise games, where the games would be held and who would run the organizations overseeing organized soccer worldwide," US Attorney General Loretta Lynch said. "They were expected to uphold the rules and keep soccer honest. Instead, they corrupted the world of soccer."

HOW I BECAME A FAN OF THE 'BEAUTIFUL GAME'

I came late to my interest in soccer. I grew up in California playing the classic American sports of football, baseball and basketball. Soccer was not a varsity sport at my high

school, and there were no youth soccer clubs. Only when I had children and they signed up for soccer teams sponsored by a relatively new group called the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) did I become interested, learning the rules and agreeing to become an assistant coach.

As an American ambassador in Europe during the Clinton administration, I began to follow soccer more seriously (although ice hockey was still the predominant sport in Finland, where I served). By the time I returned to the US for an academic position in Los Angeles, I had become a fan.

At Occidental College, I began teaching a course on sports and diplomacy, inviting leading soccer experts such as Financial Times columnist Simon Kuper and journalist David Goldblatt to speak on campus. During the summer of 2014, I was thrilled that ESPN broadcast every World Cup match in real time; I watched as many games as I could.

FIFA'S DIRTY CASINO

The US Department of Justice announced indictments of 14 FIFA officials and sports marketing executives this past week, charging them with "rampant, systemic and deep-rooted" corruption. When Swiss authorities made early morning arrests of half of them at a posh hotel in Switzerland as the FIFA World Congress met to reelect its authoritarian leader Sepp Blatter, I cheered at the news.

The US move has been praised and condemned, but I think that it strengthens America's soft power around the world, sending a clear message against monopoly,

anti-democratic processes and corruption—and in a sport that most of the world loves.

The importance of the role that FIFA plays in controlling a global sports event cannot be underestimated.

For many countries, hosting the World Cup or the Olympics is seen as a coming of age event—an opportunity to promote its country brand on a global stage. Hosting the World Cup in 2010 signaled that South Africa was now a rising multiracial society. When Brazil was awarded the 2014 World Cup, the country's president announced that the country had arrived as a global player. The competition to host the World Cup can be a high-stakes game; FIFA owns the casino, sets the term of the bets and controls the winnings.

SOFT POWER TRIUMPHS

The selection by FIFA of Putin's Russia to host the 2018 World Cup and of tiny Qatar to host in 2022 was highly suspect. Suspicions of money changing hands and undue influence on the FIFA executive committee were widespread, and led to cynicism about FIFA as an international sporting organization.

Blatter, who was re-elected for his fifth term as head of the organization, has continually shrugged off concerns about his leadership. He has worked at FIFA for 40 years, the past 17 as president. Although FIFA is mocked by TV comedians like John Oliver and criticized by citizen groups demanding great transparency, reform of the organization has seemed unlikely. Blatter maintained tight control of the organization. FIFA's insider-controlled governance structure seemed impenetrable, until the US took legal action.

"Today, soccer wins, transparency wins. Enough of dirty deals, enough of lies," former

Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona told the media after the indictment. Romário de Souza Faria, a Brazilian soccer star turned politician, praised the FBI on the floor of the Brazilian Senate. Popular British soccer blogger Roger Bennett told CBS Morning News that the US deserved the thanks of the world for moving against FIFA officials.

The immediate impact of the Department of Justice action is a plus for American soft power. Although the US is late to the soccer world—baseball, football and basketball have always had more appeal—the game has greatly expanded from AYSO youth leagues to top collegiate teams to a professional soccer league. Begun in 1993, Major League Soccer (MLS) has expanded to 20 cities in the US and Canada and is now moving toward profitability. Average attendance at matches exceeds that of the NBA and the NHL.

Growing Latino immigration has also fueled interest. The US women's World Cup soccer team, led by such stars as Mia Hamm and Abby Wambach, has helped grow the sport as well. Slowly but surely, the US is becoming a soccer nation.

US OVERREACHING? HARDLY

Some countries are less than pleased with the US legal moves. Russian President Vladimir Putin charged that the US actions "are another blatant attempt by the United States to extend its jurisdiction to other states." At a press conference, Putin tried to link the FIFA indictments to the US pursuit of former NSA employee Edward Snowden and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

No doubt Qatar officials are getting nervous that their selection as 2022 hosts might be reversed. After the arrests this week, Swiss prosecutors announced a new criminal investigation into the awarding of the 2018

and 2022 World Cups. Authorities in Brazil and Argentina have begun investigations of their own soccer officials in cooperation with their US counterparts.

In the voting for the head of FIFA at the close of the week, the US and most European nations supported reform candidate Prince Ali bin al-Hussein of Jordan, while most Asian and African nations stuck with the incumbent. FIFA's president is elected in a one-country, one-vote system, with a secret ballot among its 209 member country soccer organizations. Blatter has used his position and control of millions of dollars doled out to developing countries to offset his unpopularity in the US and Europe, so it was not a surprise that he was reelected by a 133-73 vote.

Like Putin or other authoritarian leaders, Blatter will not give up power easily. It will be interesting to see if the US will stay the course, continue legal investigations and use public diplomacy to call for transparency and honesty in global soccer.

Play Ball, Not Make War

September 13, 2014—*Harvard International Review*

Nelson Mandela once said: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people... sport can create hope where once there was only despair.”

Sport is one of the great commonalities of human beings. More people watch or play sports than almost any other human activity. Sport reflects and affects ideas of race, sex, class, as well as national pride and identity. Sport can change a country’s “brand,” and, as I’ve learned from my career, sports can be an effective tool in the diplomat’s playbook.

Growing up in a middle class section of Greater Los Angeles, sport was a central part of my daily life. I played football, basketball, baseball and tennis, swam in the public pool, collected baseball cards, and attended games of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Rams and UCLA Bruins. In high school, playing varsity basketball and tennis brought me the school’s scholar athlete award.

At university, other interests like Civil Rights and the Vietnam War seemed more “serious.” I stopped playing sports and rarely watched games—it wasn’t until I had a family with children that sports again became part of my daily life. Serving as soccer coach for 6 year-olds, watching my sons’ basketball games, cheering at my daughter’s gymnastic competitions, and playing in a regular men’s basketball games and tennis matches became my routine.

During the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, my son and I watched an exhibition baseball game in which Nicaragua was playing, while President Reagan was clandestinely trying to

overthrow the country’s government. My op-ed piece for the Los Angeles Times “Let ‘Baseball Diplomacy’ win a big one for peace,” on using sports as a way to reach out to Latin nations with which the US had conflicts (including a proposal for major league expansion teams for Havana and Washington, DC.) was placed in the Congressional Record by Congressman Mel Levine; it was cited by other prominent politicians, such as Bill Clinton.

When President Clinton appointed me as the US Ambassador to Finland, I had the opportunity to practice sports diplomacy. Playing tennis on Sundays with leading Finnish diplomats was part of my diplomat’s tool kit. Esko Aho, the Prime Minister of Finland, challenged me to a friendly game of doubles. Aho brought a ringer as his partner—a Finnish Davis Cup star—and I came with my political officer, but it was all good fun (we let the Prime Minister win, of course), and it helped to smooth my relations with him and his Centre Party colleagues. My regular Sunday tennis game led to a friendship with Max Jakobson, Finland’s version of George Kennan, the so-called inventor of “containment theory.” Max had served as the Finnish ambassador to the UN (and was almost made UN Secretary General, only to be vetoed by the Soviet Union). And when Henry Kissinger visited Finland, he asked for a private meeting with Max—and I hosted a breakfast at my residence for the three of us. Later, Kissinger reciprocated by hosting a dinner at his Manhattan home for the President of Finland, when we came on an official visit. Tennis diplomacy had, in my personal experience, clearly paid off.

With the ambassador as point guard, US embassy Helsinki's basketball team competed in a Finnish industrial league during which we met businessmen from a number of Finnish companies, leading to useful contacts for visiting American businessmen. After graduating from university in California, my eldest son came to Finland to play professionally. Attending his games, local officials often challenged the US ambassador to diplomatic free-throw shooting contests at half time, which the Finnish press covered favorably.

Enthusiastically greeting American professional and college sports teams, attending the games and inviting the teams to my official residence along with their Finnish competitors was another use of sports diplomacy. I attended professional hockey matches with the Prime Minister, and greeted the US national hockey team when they came to play. The team presented me with an official jersey with my last name on it; I was also honored to open the championship game in the Finnish American football league at the Olympic stadium. There were, however, touchy diplomatic issues—one such incident occurred when African-American players in the Finnish basketball league were attacked by drunken fans—which required my attention. The culprits later apologized, saying that they had not realized that the players were Americans; they thought they were African immigrants. My public statement that such brutish behavior was wrong regardless of the country of origin seemed to go over well with the Finnish public. These experiences as the top US diplomat in Finland convinced me of the impact of sports on the public and international sphere.

BREAKING THE ICE

Returning to teach at Occidental College after my diplomatic service, I continued to

explore sport's impact on international relations. At its most ambitious, sports diplomacy has been used to try to bring together national adversaries. In 1934, baseball great Babe Ruth and a team of US all-stars made a good will tour of Japan. The hope of the sponsors was that the tour might reduce tensions between Japan and the US. Over 100,000 fans cheered the Babe and his teammates as they paraded along the Ginza. The US team played games in twelve cities, and US Ambassador Joseph Grew called Ruth one of the most effective Goodwill Ambassadors ever sent to Japan. Although the trip stimulated the development of Japanese baseball, US-Japanese diplomacy did not follow and war broke out. During WWII, Japanese soldiers were heard to yell across battle lines, "Babe Ruth, go to Hell!"

The most effective example of sports diplomacy is ping-pong diplomacy between the US and the People's Republic of China in 1971. While often cited as a case of the power of sports to bring enemies together, it is, as evident in both the above and following examples, less an exemplar than an exception. The circumstances were right for US-China rapprochement and ping-pong diplomacy. What is not commonly recognized is that this was a Chinese initiative. Zhou En-lai, wanting to escape the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and to advance the feelers from the Nixon administration, arranged for the US ping-pong team playing in Japan to be invited to China. After this highly publicized visit and exhibition games (which the much better Chinese players let the US occasionally win), the Chinese team then visited the US, touring Disneyland, riding on a Memphis steamboat, and meeting local officials, although pro-Taiwan groups and anti-communist groups protested.

These highly publicized visits, well-described in Nicholas Griffin's extensively researched

book, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, prepared public opinion in both countries for the dramatic meeting of President Nixon and Chairman Mao, and the subsequent signing of the Shanghai Accord which led to formal normalization under President Carter. Sports diplomacy worked well in the context of serious diplomacy by both governments' efforts towards normalization of relations.

Subsequent attempts to play the sports card at the highest levels of diplomacy have been less effective. During the Clinton administration, the President tried baseball diplomacy with Cuba, approving a 1999 trip by the Baltimore Orioles to play in Havana. Clinton also used wrestling diplomacy with Iran, sending the US team to compete in Tehran. Unfortunately, differences between the two countries and internal politics were not conducive to rapprochement through sports diplomacy.

Similar attempts at sports diplomacy have also proved elusive to other nations. In 2008, Turkey's president, Abdullah Gul, visited Armenia to attend the Turkey-Armenia qualifying soccer match in Yerevan. It was the first time that a modern Turkish leader had visited Armenia, and it seemed to signal a new willingness from both countries to resolve differences and normalize relations. International press coverage hailed it as "football diplomacy," but the issues of the Armenian "genocide" and Nagorno-Karabakh proved too difficult, and the opening was not followed with diplomatic success. Such examples show that replicating the success of US-Chinese ping-pong diplomacy seems unlikely and, unfortunately, a rarity in international relations. Far more common are the ways in which the globalization of sport increasingly plays a soft power role in international affairs, a role that has expanded following sports' growing reach to all corners of the world.

RAISING THE NATIONAL PROFILE

At the 1964 Olympics, the first broadcast globally, Japan used the opportunity to showcase itself as a comeback nation after the devastation of WWII, and to presage its rise as an economic force in the global economy. In 2020, Japan will again host the Summer Olympics, this time sending a message of renewal after economic recession and devastation by tsunami and nuclear meltdown. South Korea's hosting of the World Cup (jointly with Japan) in 2002 was an effort to announce its arrival as a serious globalized country. Even more so was China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics when Beijing wanted to change its national image from Tiananmen Square to the Bird's Nest stadium. The narrative of the opening evening's ceremonies was a carefully constructed set of soft power images of Chinese civilization, emphasizing its ancient cultural achievements and neatly side-stepping its Maoist past.

A potential problem with hosting a mega sports event in today's globalized media environment is that the host country cannot control the message received. One recent example clearly elucidates this: Russia hosted the winter Olympics this year and has won the right to host the World Cup in 2018. Putin tried to turn the winter games into a triumph for Russian soft power. More than US\$50 billion was spent by the Russian government and Russian companies on preparing and hosting the games. Intense security measures prevented a terrorist incident, but initial press coverage focused on the mixed quality of Russian hotels, the round-up and killing of Sochi's stray dogs, and the exorbitant costs. The opening night's cultural and musical performance, not unlike that in Beijing, presented the story of Russian civilization, not Soviet communism (except for a few images of tractors and steel mills), focusing on famous Russian composers and authors. It

seemed that Putin had pulled off a soft power success, only to sully it almost immediately with his use of hard power in Crimea and Ukraine; deteriorating living conditions as well as human rights concerns were also similarly corrosive to the ideal image that Putin had attempted to paint through its hosting of the global event.

The world watched as Brazil prepared for this summer's World Cup and then the Olympics in 2016. When Brazil was awarded these events, the country's President Lula hailed the moment as the arrival of Brazil as a global player. Press stories leading up to the World Cup focused on the lack of readiness of many of the facilities, on the sorry state of Brazil's hotel and transportation infrastructure, and on the protests which broke out over the costs of the sport facilities in contrast to the state of Brazilian education or transportation. The *New York Times* reported that preparations for the Olympics are the furthest behind schedule in modern Olympic history. Brazil might well come to regret the global spot light that comes with hosting these international sporting events.

Individual sports stars and the success of national teams, moreover, can also raise a nation's profile. The success of Japanese baseball players such as Hideo Nomo and Ichiro Suzuki in the US has been important to improving Japan's international image. Two Japanese relievers, Koji Uehara and Junichi Tazawa, played highly visible roles in the Boston Red Sox's winning the World Series in 2013. In Los Angeles, a cohort of 10,000 Korean Americans attend Dodger stadium whenever South Korean pitcher Hyun-Jin Ryu takes the mound, and millions more watch as the games are televised live in his home country. The Dodger's first great Mexican pitcher Fernando Valenzuela lifted Mexican pride as "Fernandomania" took hold on both sides of the border.

Asian women athletes such as South Korean golf star So Yeon Ryu, or Shansahn Feng, the first woman from China to win an LPGA tournament, and her rival Taiwan star Yani Tseng, as well as the Japanese women's national soccer team have altered the image of Asian women. Chinese teenage golfer Guan Tianlang played at the Masters, and exemplifies the change in Chinese sports development from a state run system to the private country clubs of the rising middle class. International tennis stars Serena and Venus Williams are a loud and clear global message of the rise of female athletes in the United States. The national pride and media attention that sports figures receive allow such athletes to become prominent spokespeople for public issues, and of course, to endorse commercial products for the global market.

Conversely, the bad behavior of sports stars can tarnish a country's soft power. Lance Armstrong's admission to drug use and the suspension of Yankee Alex Rodriguez for using performance-enhancing drugs did not improve America's image abroad. The refusal of the owner of the Washington Redskins football team to change its name and the racist sentiments expressed by Donald Sterling, owner of the LA Clippers basketball team, reminded a globalized audience that the US still struggles with its racial heritage. Hooliganism and racist incidents at soccer matches in Italy and France similarly detract from these countries' soft power.

The intrinsic nature of sports and its ability to focus attention on an individual and his or her nation has lent it its far-reaching implications in diplomacy. As seen above, these implications can either enhance or detract from a nation's international image.

SELLING THE NATIONAL BRAND

In the post-Cold War era, sport has become globalized, wedded to global commercial interests that promote the national brand as well as the bottom line.

While lecturing for the State Department in China in the late 90s, I would ask students who they thought was the most popular American. An overwhelming number of students named Michael Jordan, whose iconic picture on Nike ads adorned the walls of Chinese restaurants and shops. Today, Kobe Bryant and Jeremy Lin are global superstars in China and in the rest of Asia and whose games are broadcast live in China, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. The first Chinese star to make it in the NBA was Yao Ming, hailed by President Bill Clinton as “a symbol of China’s turning from an inward-looking nation to an outward-looking nation.” The NBA has opened the Yao Ming Center in Beijing to help develop Chinese players. An estimated 300 million Chinese play basketball, making it the country’s most popular sport. China has created a largely privately owned basketball league, the CBA, intended to rival the NBA, but it is riven with corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of international quality players. Vladimir Putin is pushing the expansion of the Kontinental Hockey League, aspiring to surpass the NHL.

An increasing number of countries are employing sports as part of their public diplomacy efforts. New Zealand embraces Rugby Diplomacy through its national team, the All-Blacks. It used the hosting of the World Rugby Cup in 2011 to redefine New Zealand as a diverse, multi-racial country which prides itself on high tech innovation and green products. Kiwi diplomats promote the playing of rugby in other countries, especially among children of color, and proudly display photos of the All-Blacks

doing the Haka, the Maori war dance. With strong support from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the US State Department expanded its Sports Envoy program, sending American athletes—in particular, women, disabled athletes and players of color—on public diplomacy tours. In a series of moves to expand sports’ role and those who participate in them, Mrs. Clinton sent Laker great Kareem Abdul Jabbar to Brazil as a US sports ambassador.

Beginning in 1932 and revived after WWII, Israel has hosted the Maccabiah Games—the “Jewish Olympics”—where Jewish athletes (and also Israeli Arabs) compete every four years in Maccabiah Stadium in Tel Aviv. In 2013, more than 9000 athletes from 78 countries participated, making the games the third largest sporting event in the world. One of the medal winners was Kera Bartlett, a graduate of Occidental and my former diplomacy student, who won a Bronze in the pole vault.

Canada and Norway, as middle powers, have also embraced sports as part of their diplomatic tool kits. Canada has, not surprisingly, practiced hockey diplomacy, sending teams to play in China. Norway hosts an annual goodwill soccer tournament for international youth teams, and the Norwegian Development Agency has funded “Kicking Aids Out” as an effort use soccer to promote AIDS awareness in Africa.

In a globalized world, sport is a vital part of almost every country’s soft power. It can increase national pride, spread national influence, and serve as a useful tool of public diplomacy, encouraging communication and international understanding.

Can Sports Bring World Peace?

The power of sport has also been recognized by a number of international organizations. In 2000, Prime Minister of Greece George Papandreou and the International Olympic Committee established the International Truce Centre with the goal of reviving the ancient tradition of the Olympic truce. The Centre includes a foundation which promotes peace by mobilizing athletes, youth and political leaders around sport and peace. A year later, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan created the Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), and in 2004, an international working group was formed with forty-five member nations. An increasing number of NGOs are also utilizing sport in their work. Search for Common Ground, a Washington DC-based organization, utilizes sports to bring together Israeli and Palestinian youth. The World Disc Federation supports Ultimate Diplomacy, organizing Ultimate Peace matches between youth in conflict areas, including the West Bank.

These and other non-profit ventures have had an impact in particular cases, but are not transformative internationally. A greater effect, at least in terms of changing public attitudes, has come from the globalization of players and coaches in major sports leagues—a development which Simon Kuper, columnist for the Financial Times and co-author of *Soccernomics*, argues is creating a new post-nationalism in sports competition. Fans around the world root for their favorite teams whose players, coaches and owners increasingly come from all over the globe. Local is now increasingly global.

German soccer star Jurgen Klinsmann coaches the US national soccer team. Former US player Bob Bradley coached the Egyptian national soccer team. Most of the coaches in the Chinese and Japanese soccer leagues come from Europe. Hockey players from Scandinavia, Russia, and Eastern Europe are

stars in the NHL. International players are gaining a significant presence in the NBA. The San Antonio Spurs have pioneered in recruitment of international players. Major League Baseball boasts players from Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and even Australia.

The leading UEFA champion soccer teams from England, Italy, France, and Portugal now contain an average of about twenty-five percent or less of domestic players. The rest are foreigners, including a number of stars from Africa such as Ivory Coast-born Didier Drogba, as well as dark-skinned players from Brazil and Latinos from Argentina and Uruguay. The British team Liverpool is owned by Fenway Sports Group (which also owns the Boston Red Sox) and has over half a billion fans, a majority of them in Asia. The global audience for the English Premier League is at least 4 billion. Manchester City is owned by an oil sheik and Cardiff City by a Malaysian. A Russian oligarch owns Chelsea. NBC Sports and Fox Sports broadcast European soccer to US homes. Japan's NHK broadcasts American baseball to Japan. ESPN-Brazil televises the NFL game of the week to Brazilians.

The globalization of sports, however, does not magically make global citizens. There are still racist incidents. The privately recorded racist comments of LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling led almost overnight to his lifetime banning from the NBA. Fifty members of the US Senate have urged the NFL to pressure the Washington Redskins to change the team name. Dilma Rousseff, president of Brazil, took a public stand against racism after bananas were thrown at a dark skinned Brazilian soccer star playing in Spain. As anti-migrant sentiment increased in Switzerland, a German media outlet showed a picture of how the Swiss national soccer team would look without players with a multicultural

background—only three “pure” Swiss starters would be left on the starting team.

Sport in our globalized era is overall a force for good—for increased international understanding, peaceful competition, and promotion of global citizenship. It doesn’t substitute for traditional diplomacy and smart use of hard power, but it can be a virtuous form of soft power.

About the Author



Ambassador Derek Shearer is Chevalier Professor of Diplomacy and World Affairs at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He handles the college's international relations, directing the expansion of its international affairs programs, and serves as Director of the McKinnon Center for Global Affairs.

Derek Shearer served in the Clinton administration as an economics official in the Commerce Department, and then as Ambassador to Finland (1994-97). Among his many accomplishments were the creation of the administration's coordinated strategy to the Nordic-Baltic region and the hosting of the Clinton-Yeltsin summit in Helsinki. At Ambassador Shearer's recommendation during the presidential campaign, President Clinton established the National Economic Council in the White House. He was a co-author of the Clinton-Gore campaign program Putting People First. After diplomatic service, Ambassador Shearer was a fellow at the Economic Strategy Institute and then at the Woodrow Wilson Scholars Center in Washington, DC. He also has been a visiting Woodrow Wilson fellow and ambassador-in-residence at a number of colleges. He served as a foreign policy advisor to Vice President Gore during the 2000 Presidential campaign and to Senator Hillary Clinton in 2008.

Ambassador Shearer's articles on foreign affairs and public policy have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and many weekly and monthly publications. He has authored numerous scholarly and policy articles in books and journals—and has lectured at leading universities in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Australia, including speaking tours for the US government in China, Japan, Greece, Australia, Kazakhstan, Peru, Chile, Syria and the Baltic States—and taught at the University of Maryland, Tufts, and UCLA, as well as at Occidental. He has lectured on US foreign policy at Pembroke College, Cambridge, St. Andrews University, St. Anthony's College, Oxford, the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard as well as at leading universities in Canada, New Zealand and Brazil. Ambassador Shearer has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an US-Japan Leadership Fellowship, and a Swedish Bicentennial Fellowship, among other honors—and he is listed in *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in America*, and other such publications. He also is a regular contributor to the *Huffington Post*.

In addition to courses on diplomacy, terrorism, and US foreign policy, Ambassador Shearer has taught courses on entrepreneurship, served on the boards of media and food companies, and as an international advisor to Ziff Brothers Investment Co, and other firms. He has served on the board of the nonprofit relief group Operation USA, and is a member of the Pacific Council on International Policy and the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. He currently resides in Pacific Palisades, CA. with his wife Sue Toigo, and two dogs, Nick and Nora, and Vera the cat.



Nobel Man, art by Linda Lyke