

This is Change. 20 Hawks, Clintonites and Neocons to Watch for in Obama's White House

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, November 22, 2008

[Alternet.org](#) 20 November 2008

U.S. policy is not about one individual, and no matter how much faith people place in President-elect Barack Obama, the policies he enacts will be fruit of a tree with many roots. Among them: his personal politics and views, the disastrous realities his administration will inherit, and, of course, unpredictable future crises. But the best immediate indicator of what an Obama administration might look like can be found in the people he surrounds himself with and who he appoints to his Cabinet. And, frankly, when it comes to foreign policy, it is not looking good.

Obama has a momentous opportunity to do what he repeatedly promised over the course of his campaign: bring actual change. But the more we learn about who Obama is considering for top positions in his administration, the more his inner circle resembles a staff reunion of President Bill Clinton's White House. Although Obama brought some progressives on board early in his campaign, his foreign policy team is now dominated by the hawkish, old-guard Democrats of the 1990s. This has been particularly true since Hillary Clinton conceded defeat in the Democratic primary, freeing many of her top advisors to join Obama's team.

"What happened to all this talk about change?" a member of the Clinton foreign policy team recently asked the *Washington Post*. "This isn't lightly flavored with Clintons. This is all Clintons, all the time."

Amid the euphoria over Obama's election and the end of the Bush era, it is critical to recall what 1990s U.S. foreign policy actually looked like. Bill Clinton's boiled down to a one-two punch from the hidden hand of the free market, backed up by the iron fist of U.S. militarism. Clinton took office and almost immediately bombed Iraq (ostensibly in retaliation for an alleged plot by Saddam Hussein to assassinate former President George H.W. Bush). He presided over a ruthless regime of economic sanctions that killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and under the guise of the so-called No-Fly Zones in northern and southern Iraq, authorized the longest sustained U.S. bombing campaign since Vietnam.

Under Clinton, Yugoslavia was bombed and dismantled as part of what Noam Chomsky described as the "New Military Humanism." Sudan and Afghanistan were attacked, Haiti was destabilized and "free trade" deals like the North America Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade radically escalated the spread of corporate-dominated globalization that hurt U.S. workers and devastated developing countries. Clinton accelerated the militarization of the so-called War on Drugs in Central and Latin America and supported privatization of U.S. military operations, giving lucrative contracts to Halliburton and other war contractors. Meanwhile, U.S. weapons sales to countries like Turkey and Indonesia aided genocidal campaigns against the Kurds and the East Timorese.

The prospect of Obama's foreign policy being, at least in part, an extension of the Clinton Doctrine is real. Even more disturbing, several of the individuals at the center of Obama's transition and emerging foreign policy teams were top players in creating and implementing foreign policies that would pave the way for projects eventually carried out under the Bush/Cheney administration. With their assistance, Obama has already charted out several hawkish stances. Among them:

- His plan to escalate the war in Afghanistan;
- An Iraq plan that could turn into a downsized and rebranded occupation that keeps U.S. forces in Iraq for the foreseeable future;
- His labeling of Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a "terrorist organization;"
- His pledge to use unilateral force inside of Pakistan to defend U.S. interests;
- His position, presented before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), that Jerusalem "must remain undivided" — a remark that infuriated Palestinian officials and which he later attempted to reframe;
- His plan to continue the War on Drugs, a backdoor U.S. counterinsurgency campaign in Central and Latin America;
- His refusal to "rule out" using Blackwater and other armed private forces in U.S. war zones, despite previously introducing legislation to regulate these companies and bring them under U.S. law.

Obama did not arrive at these positions in a vacuum. They were carefully crafted in consultation with his foreign policy team. While the verdict is still out on a few people, many members of his inner foreign policy circle — including some who have received or are bound to receive Cabinet posts — supported the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Some promoted the myth that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. A few have worked with the neoconservative Project for the New American Century, whose radical agenda was adopted by the Bush/Cheney administration. And most have proven track records of supporting or implementing militaristic, offensive U.S. foreign policy. "After a masterful campaign, Barack Obama seems headed toward some fateful mistakes as he assembles his administration by heeding the advice of Washington's Democratic insider community, a collective group that represents little 'change you can believe in,'" notes veteran journalist Robert Parry, the former Associated Press and *Newsweek* reporter who broke many of the stories in the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s.

As news breaks and speculation abounds about cabinet appointments, here are 20 people to watch as Obama builds the team who will shape U.S. foreign policy for at least four years:

Joe Biden

There was no stronger sign that Obama's foreign policy would follow the hawkish tradition of the Democratic foreign policy establishment than his selection of Sen. Joe Biden as his running mate. Much has been written on Biden's tenure as head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but his role in the invasion and occupation of Iraq stands out. Biden is not just one more Democratic lawmaker who now calls his vote to authorize the use of force in Iraq "mistaken;" Biden was actually an important facilitator of the war.

In the summer of 2002, when the United States was “debating” a potential attack on Iraq, Biden presided over hearings whose ostensible purpose was to weigh all existing options. But instead of calling on experts whose testimony could challenge the case for war — Iraq’s alleged WMD possession and its supposed ties to al-Qaida — Biden’s hearings treated the invasion as a foregone conclusion. His refusal to call on two individuals in particular ensured that testimony that could have proven invaluable to an actual debate was never heard: Former Chief United Nations Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter and Hans von Sponeck, a 32-year veteran diplomat and the former head of the U.N.’s Iraq program.

Both men say they made it clear to Biden’s office that they were ready and willing to testify; Ritter knew more about the dismantling of Iraq’s WMD program than perhaps any other U.S. citizen and would have been in prime position to debunk the misinformation and outright lies being peddled by the White House. Meanwhile, von Sponeck had just returned from Iraq, where he had observed Ansar al Islam rebels in the north of Iraq — the so-called al-Qaida connection — and could have testified that, rather than colluding with Saddam’s regime, they were in a battle against it. Moreover, he would have pointed out that they were operating in the U.S.-enforced safe haven of Iraqi Kurdistan. “Evidence of al-Qaida/Iraq collaboration does not exist, neither in the training of operatives nor in support to Ansar-al-Islam,” von Sponeck wrote in an Op-Ed published shortly before the July 2002 hearings. “The U.S. Department of Defense and the CIA know perfectly well that today’s Iraq poses no threat to anyone in the region, let alone in the United States. To argue otherwise is dishonest.”

With both men barred from testifying, rather than eliciting an array of informed opinions, Biden’s committee whitewashed Bush’s lies and helped lead the country to war. Biden himself promoted the administration’s false claims that were used to justify the invasion of Iraq, declaring on the Senate floor, “[Saddam Hussein] possesses chemical and biological weapons and is seeking nuclear weapons.”

With the war underway, Biden was then the genius who passionately promoted the ridiculous plan to partition Iraq into three areas based on religion and ethnicity, attempting to Balkanize one of the strongest Arab states in the world.

“He’s a part of the old Democratic establishment,” says retired Army Col. Ann Wright, the State Department diplomat who reopened the U.S. embassy in Kabul in 2002. Biden, she says, has “had a long history with foreign affairs, [but] it’s not the type of foreign affairs that I want.”

Rahm Emanuel

Obama’s appointment of Illinois Congressman Rahm Emanuel as Chief of Staff is a clear sign that Clinton-era neoliberal hawks will be well-represented at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. A former senior Clinton advisor, Emanuel is a hard-line supporter of Israel’s “targeted assassination” policy and actually volunteered to work with the Israeli Army during the 1991 Gulf War. He is close to the right-wing Democratic Leadership Council and was the only member of the Illinois Democratic delegation in the Congress to vote for the invasion of Iraq. Unlike many of his colleagues, Emanuel still defends his vote. As chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in 2006, Emanuel promoted the campaigns of 22 candidates, only one of who supported a swift withdrawal from Iraq, and denied crucial Party funding to anti-war candidates. “As for Iraq policy, at the right time, we will have a position,” he said in December 2005. As Philip Giraldi recently pointed out on Antiwar.com, Emanuel

“advocates increasing the size of the U.S. Army by 100,000 soldiers and creating a domestic spying organization like Britain’s MI5. More recently, he has supported mandatory paramilitary national service for all Americans between the ages of 18 and 25.”

While Obama has at times been critical of Clinton-era free trade agreements, Emanuel was one of the key people in the Clinton White House who brokered the successful passage of NAFTA.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

For all the buzz and speculation about the possibility that Sen. Clinton may be named Secretary of State, most media coverage has focused on her rivalry with Obama during the primary, along with the prospect of her husband having to face the intense personal, financial and political vetting process required to secure a job in the new administration. But the question of how Clinton would lead the operations at Foggy Bottom calls for scrutiny of her positions vis-a-vis Obama’s stated foreign-policy goals.

Clinton was an ardent defender of her husband’s economic and military war against Iraq throughout the 1990s, including the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, which ultimately laid the path for President George W. Bush’s invasion. Later, as a U.S. senator, she not only voted to authorize the war, but aided the Bush administration’s propaganda campaign in the lead-up to the invasion. “Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile-delivery capability and his nuclear program,” Clinton said when rising to support the measure in October 2002. “He has also given aid, comfort and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaida members. I want to insure that Saddam Hussein makes no mistake about our national unity and for our support for the president’s efforts to wage America’s war against terrorists and weapons of mass destruction.”

“The man who vowed to deliver us from 28 years of Bushes and Clintons has been stocking up on Clintonites,” *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd recently wrote. “How, one may ask, can he put Hillary — who voted to authorize the Iraq war without even reading the intelligence assessment — in charge of patching up a foreign policy and a world riven by that war?”

Beyond Iraq, Clinton shocked many and sparked official protests by Tehran at the United Nations when asked during the presidential campaign what she would do as president if Iran attacked Israel with nuclear weapons. “I want the Iranians to know that if I’m the president, we will attack Iran,” she declared. “In the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them.”

Clinton has not shied away from supporting offensive foreign policy tactics in the past. Recalling her husband’s weighing the decision of whether to attack Yugoslavia, she said in 1999, “I urged him to bomb. I cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?”

Madeleine Albright

While Obama’s house is flush with Clintonian officials like former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary William Perry, Director of the State Department Office of

Policy Planning Greg Craig (who was officially named Obama's White House Counsel) and Navy Secretary Richard Danzig, perhaps most influential is Madeleine Albright, Bill Clinton's former Secretary of State and U.N. ambassador. Albright recently served as a proxy for Obama, representing him at the G-20 summit earlier this month. Whether or not she is awarded an official role in the administration, Albright will be a major force in shaping Obama's foreign policy.

"It will take time to convince skeptics that the promotion of democracy is not a mask for imperialism or a recipe for the kind of chaos we have seen in the Persian Gulf," Albright recently wrote. "And it will take time to establish the right identity for America in a world that has grown suspicious of all who claim a monopoly on virtue and that has become reluctant to follow the lead of any one country."

Albright should know. She was one of the key architects in the dismantling of Yugoslavia during the 1990s. In the lead-up to the 1999 "Kosovo war," she oversaw the U.S. attempt to coerce the Yugoslav government to deny its own sovereignty in return for not being bombed. Albright demanded that the Yugoslav government sign a document that would have been unacceptable to any sovereign nation. Known as the Rambouillet Accord, it included a provision that would have guaranteed U.S. and NATO forces "free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout" all of Yugoslavia — not just Kosovo — while also seeking to immunize those occupation forces "from any form of arrest, investigation or detention by the authorities in [Yugoslavia]." Moreover, it would have granted the occupiers "the use of airports, roads, rails and ports without payment." Similar to Bush's Iraq plan years later, the Rambouillet Accord mandated that the economy of Kosovo "shall function in accordance with free-market principles."

When Yugoslavia refused to sign the document, Albright and others in the Clinton administration unleashed the 78-day NATO bombing of Serbia, which targeted civilian infrastructure. (Prior to the attack, Albright said the U.S. government felt "the Serbs need a little bombing.") She and the Clinton administration also supported the rise to power in Kosovo of a terrorist mafia that carried out its own ethnic-cleansing campaign against the province's minorities.

Perhaps Albright's most notorious moment came with her enthusiastic support of the economic war against the civilian population of Iraq. When confronted by Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" that the sanctions were responsible for the deaths of "a half-million children Š more children than died in Hiroshima," Albright responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price — we think the price is worth it." (While defending the policy, Albright later called her choice of words "a terrible mistake, hasty, clumsy, and wrong.")

Richard Holbrooke

Like Albright, Holbrooke will have major sway over U.S. policy, whether or not he gets an official job. A career diplomat since the Vietnam War, Holbrooke's most recent government post was as President Clinton's ambassador to the U.N. Among the many violent policies he helped implement and enforce was the U.S.-backed Indonesian genocide in East Timor. Holbrooke was an Assistant Secretary of State in the late 1970s at the height of the slaughter and was the point man on East Timor for the Carter Administration.

According to Brad Simpson, director of the Indonesia and East Timor Documentation Project at the National Security Archive at George Washington University, "It was Holbrooke and Zbigniew Brzezinski [another top Obama advisor], both now leading lights in the Democratic

Party, who played point in trying to frustrate the efforts of congressional human-rights activists to try and condition or stop U.S. military assistance to Indonesia, and in fact accelerated the flow of weapons to Indonesia at the height of the genocide.”

Holbrooke, too, was a major player in the dismantling of Yugoslavia and praised the bombing of Serb Television, which killed 16 media workers, as a significant victory. (The man who ordered that bombing, now-retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark, is another Obama foreign policy insider who could end up in his cabinet. While Clark is known for being relatively progressive on social issues, as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, he ordered bombings and attacks that Amnesty International labeled war crimes.)

Like many in Obama’s foreign policy circle, Holbrooke also supported the Iraq war. In early 2003, shortly after then-Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech to the UN, where he presented the administration’s fraud-laden case for war to the UN (a speech Powell has since called a “blot” on his reputation), Holbrooke said: “It was a masterful job of diplomacy by Colin Powell and his colleagues, and it does not require a second vote to go to war. Saddam is the most dangerous government leader in the world today, he poses a threat to the region, he could pose a larger threat if he got weapons of mass destruction deployed, and we have a legitimate right to take action.”

Dennis Ross

Middle East envoy for both George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Ross was one of the primary authors of Obama’s aforementioned speech before AIPAC this summer. He cut his teeth working under famed neoconservative Paul Wolfowitz at the Pentagon in the 1970s and worked closely with the Project for the New American Century. Ross has been a staunch supporter of Israel and has fanned the flames for a more hostile stance toward Iran. As the lead U.S. negotiator between Israel and numerous Arab nations under Clinton, Ross’ team acted, in the words of one U.S. official who worked under him, as “Israel’s lawyer.”

“The ‘no surprises’ policy, under which we had to run everything by Israel first, stripped our policy of the independence and flexibility required for serious peacemaking,” wrote U.S. diplomat Aaron David Miller in 2005. “If we couldn’t put proposals on the table without checking with the Israelis first, and refused to push back when they said no, how effective could our mediation be? Far too often, particularly when it came to Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, our departure point was not what was needed to reach an agreement acceptable to both sides but what would pass with only one — Israel.” After the Clinton White House, Ross worked for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a hawkish pro-Israel think tank, and for FOX News, where he repeatedly pressed for war against Iraq.

Martin Indyk

Founder of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Indyk spent years working for AIPAC and served as Clinton’s ambassador to Israel and Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, while also playing a major role in developing U.S. policy toward Iraq and Iran. In addition to his work for the U.S. government, he has worked for the Israeli government and with PNAC.

“Barack Obama has painted himself into a corner by appealing to the most hard-line, pro-Israel elements in this country,” Ali Abunimah, founder of ElectronicIntifada.net, recently told Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!*, describing Indyk and Dennis Ross as “two of the most

pro-Israel officials from the Clinton era, who are totally distrusted by Palestinians and others across the Middle East, because they're seen as lifelong advocates for Israeli positions."

Anthony Lake

Clinton's former National Security Advisor was an early supporter of Obama and one of the few top Clintonites to initially back the president-elect. Lake began his foreign policy work in the U.S. Foreign Service during Vietnam, working with Henry Kissinger on the "September Group," a secret team tasked with developing a military strategy to deliver a "savage, decisive blow against North Vietnam."

Decades later, after working for various administrations, Lake "was the main force behind the U.S. invasion of Haiti in the mid-Clinton years," according to veteran journalist Allan Nairn, whose groundbreaking reporting revealed U.S. support for Haitian death squads in the 1990s. "They brought back Aristide essentially in political chains, pledged to support a World Bank/IMF overhaul of the economy, which resulted in an increase in malnutrition deaths among Haitians, and set the stage for the current ongoing political disaster in Haiti." Clinton nominated Lake as CIA Director, but he failed to win Senate confirmation.

Lee Hamilton

Hamilton is a former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and was co-chairman of both the Iraq Study Group and 9/11 Commission. Robert Parry, who has covered Hamilton's career extensively, recently ran a piece on Consortium News that characterized him this way: "Whenever the Republicans have a touchy national-security scandal to put to rest, their favorite Democratic investigator is Lee Hamilton. Hamilton's carefully honed skill for balancing truth against political comity has elevated him to the status of a Washington Wise Man."

Susan Rice

Former Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice, who served on Bill Clinton's National Security Council, is a potential candidate for the post of ambassador to the U.N. or as a deputy national security advisor. She, too, promoted the myth that Saddam had WMDs. "It's clear that Iraq poses a major threat," she said in 2002. "It's clear that its weapons of mass destruction need to be dealt with forcefully, and that's the path we're on." (After the invasion, discussing Saddam's alleged possession of WMDs, she said, "I don't think many informed people doubted that.")

Rice has also been a passionate advocate for a U.S. military attack against Sudan over the Darfur crisis. In an op-ed co-authored with Anthony Lake, she wrote, "The United States, preferably with NATO involvement and African political support, would strike Sudanese airfields, aircraft and other military assets. It could blockade Port Sudan, through which Sudan's oil exports flow. Then U.N. troops would deploy — by force, if necessary, with U.S. and NATO backing."

John Brennan

A longtime CIA official and former head of the National Counterterrorism Center, Brennan is one of the coordinators of Obama's intelligence transition team and a top contender for either CIA Director or Director of National Intelligence. He was also recently described by

Glenn Greenwald as “an ardent supporter of torture and one of the most emphatic advocates of FISA expansions and telecom immunity.” While claiming to oppose waterboarding, labeling it “inconsistent with American values” and “something that should be prohibited,” Brennan has simultaneously praised the results achieved by “enhanced interrogation” techniques. “There has been a lot of information that has come out from these interrogation procedures that the agency has, in fact, used against the real hard-core terrorists,” Brennan said in a 2007 interview. “It has saved lives. And let’s not forget, these are hardened terrorists who have been responsible for 9/11, who have shown no remorse at all for the death of 3,000 innocents.”

Brennan has described the CIA’s extraordinary rendition program — the government-run kidnap-and-torture program enacted under Clinton — as an absolutely vital tool. “I have been intimately familiar now over the past decade with the cases of rendition that the U.S. Government has been involved in,” he said in a December 2005 interview. “And I can say without a doubt that it has been very successful as far as producing intelligence that has saved lives.”

Brennan is currently the head of Analysis Corporation, a private intelligence company that was recently implicated in the breach of Obama and Sen. John McCain’s passport records. He is also the current chairman of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA), a trade association of private intelligence contractors who have dramatically increased their role in sensitive U.S. national security operations. (Current Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell is former chairman of the INSA.)

Jami Miscik

Miscik, who works alongside Brennan on Obama’s transitional team, was the CIA’s Deputy Director for Intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war. She was one of the key officials responsible for sidelining intel that contradicted the official line on WMD, while promoting intel that backed it up.

“When the administration insisted on an intelligence assessment of Saddam Hussein’s relationship to al-Qaida, Miscik blocked the skeptics (who were later vindicated) within the CIA’s Mideast analytical directorate and instructed the less-skeptical counterterrorism analysts to ‘stretch to the maximum the evidence you had,’ ” journalist Spencer Ackerman recently wrote in the *Washington Independent*. “It’s hard to think of a more egregious case of sacrificing sound intelligence analysis in order to accommodate the strategic fantasies of an administration. Š The idea that Miscik is helping staff Obama’s top intelligence picks is most certainly not change we can believe in.” What’s more, she went on to a lucrative post as the Global Head of Sovereign Risk for the now-bankrupt Lehman Brothers.

John Kerry and Bill Richardson

Both Sen. Kerry and Gov. Richardson have been identified as possible contenders for Secretary of State. While neither is likely to be as hawkish as Hillary Clinton, both have taken pro-war positions. Kerry promoted the WMD lie and voted to invade Iraq. “Why is Saddam Hussein attempting to develop nuclear weapons when most nations don’t even try?” Kerry asked on the Senate floor in October 2002. “According to intelligence, Iraq has chemical and biological weapons Š Iraq is developing unmanned aerial vehicles capable of delivering chemical and biological warfare agents.”

Richardson, whose Iraq plan during his 2008 presidential campaign was more progressive and far-reaching than Obama's, served as Bill Clinton's ambassador to the UN. In this capacity, he supported Clinton's December 1998 bombing of Baghdad and the U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq. "We think this man is a threat to the international community, and he threatens a lot of the neighbors in his region and future generations there with anthrax and VX," Richardson told an interviewer in February 1998.

While Clinton's Secretary of Energy, Richardson publicly named Wen Ho Lee, a scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, as a target in an espionage investigation. Lee was accused of passing nuclear secrets to the Chinese government. Lee was later cleared of those charges and won a settlement against the U.S. government.

Robert Gates

Washington consensus is that Obama will likely keep Robert Gates, George W. Bush's Defense Secretary, as his own Secretary of Defense. While Gates has occasionally proved to be a stark contrast to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, he would hardly represent a break from the policies of the Bush administration. Quite the opposite; according to the *Washington Post*, in the interest of a "smooth transition," Gates "has ordered hundreds of political appointees at the Pentagon canvassed to see whether they wish to stay on in the new administration, has streamlined policy briefings and has set up suites for President-elect Barack Obama's transition team just down the hall from his own E-ring office." The *Post* reports that Gates could stay on for a brief period and then be replaced by Richard Danzig, who was Clinton's Secretary of the Navy. Other names currently being tossed around are Democratic Sen. Jack Reed, Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel (a critic of the Iraq occupation) and Republican Sen. Richard Lugar, who served alongside Biden on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Ivo H. Daalder

Daalder was National Security Council Director for European Affairs under President Clinton. Like other Obama advisors, he has worked with the Project for the New American Century and signed a 2005 letter from PNAC to Congressional leaders, calling for an increase in U.S. ground troops in Iraq and beyond.

Sarah Sewall

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance during the Clinton administration, Sewall served as a top advisor to Obama during the campaign and is almost certain to be selected for a post in his administration. In 2007, Sewall worked with the U.S. military and Army Gen. David Petraeus, writing the introduction to the University of Chicago edition of the Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual. She was criticized for this collaboration by Tom Hayden, who wrote, "the Petraeus plan draws intellectual legitimacy from Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, whose director, Sarah Sewall, proudly embraces an 'unprecedented collaboration [as] a human rights center partnered with the armed forces.'"

"Humanitarians often avoid wading into the conduct of war for fear of becoming complicit in its purpose," she wrote in the introduction. "The field manual requires engagement precisely from those who fear that its words lack meaning."

Michele Flournoy

Flournoy and former Clinton Deputy Defense Secretary John White are co-heading Obama's defense transition team. Flournoy was a senior Clinton appointee at the Pentagon. She currently runs the Center for a New American Security, a center-right think-tank. There is speculation that Obama could eventually name her as the first woman to serve as defense secretary. As the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported: "While at CNAS, Flournoy helped to write a report that called for reducing the open-ended American military commitment in Iraq and replacing it with a policy of 'conditional engagement' there. Significantly, the paper rejected the idea of withdrawing troops according to the sort of a fixed timeline that Obama espoused during the presidential campaign. Obama has in recent weeks signaled that he was willing to shelve the idea, bringing him more in line with Flournoy's thinking." Flournoy has also worked with the neoconservative Project for the New American Century.

Wendy Sherman and Tom Donilon

Currently employed at Madeleine Albright's consulting firm, the Albright Group, Sherman worked under Albright at the State Department, coordinating U.S. policy on North Korea. She is now coordinating the State Department transition team for Obama. Tom Donilon, her co-coordinator, was Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Chief of Staff at the State Department under Clinton. Interestingly, Sherman and Donilon both have ties to Fannie Mae that didn't make it onto their official bios on Obama's change.gov website. "Donilon was Fannie's general counsel and executive vice president for law and policy from 1999 until the spring of 2005, a period during which the company was rocked by accounting problems," reports the *Wall Street Journal*.

Denis McDonough and Mark Lippert

While many of the figures at the center of Obama's foreign policy team are well-known, two of its most important members have never held national elected office or a high-profile government position. While they cannot be characterized as Clinton-era hawks, it will be important to watch **Denis McDonough** and **Mark Lippert**, co-coordinators of the Obama foreign policy team. From 2000 to 2005, McDonough served as foreign policy advisor to Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle and worked extensively on the use-of-force authorizations for the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which Daschle supported. From 1996 to 1999, McDonough was a professional staff member of the House International Relations Committee during the debate over the bombing of Yugoslavia. More recently, he was at the Center for American Progress working under John Podesta, Clinton's former chief of staff and the current head of the Obama transition.

Mark Lippert is a close personal friend of Obama's. He has worked for Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, as well as the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Democratic Policy Committee. He is a lieutenant in the Navy Reserve and spent a year in Iraq working intelligence for the Navy SEALs. "According to those who've worked closely with Lippert," Robert Dreyfuss recently wrote in *The Nation*, "he is a conservative, cautious centrist who often pulled Obama to the right on Iraq, Iran and the Middle East and who has been a consistent advocate for increased military spending. 'Even before Obama announced for the presidency, Lippert wanted Obama to be seen as tough on Iran,' says a lobbyist who's worked the Iran issue on Capitol Hill, 'He's clearly more hawkish than the senator.' "

Barack Obama campaigned on a pledge to bring change to Washington

"I don't want to just end the war," he said early this year. "I want to end the mindset that got us into war." That is going to be very difficult if Obama employs a foreign policy team that was central to creating that mindset, before and during the presidency of George W. Bush.

"Twenty-three senators and 133 House members who voted against the war — and countless other notable individuals who spoke out against it and the dubious claims leading to war — are apparently not even being considered for these crucial positions," observes Sam Husseini of the Institute for Public Accuracy. This includes dozens of former military and intelligence officials who spoke out forcefully against the war and continue to oppose militaristic policy, as well as credible national security experts who have articulated their visions for a foreign policy based on justice.

Obama does have a chance to change the mindset that got us into war. More significantly, he has a popular mandate to forcefully challenge the militaristic, hawkish tradition of modern U.S. foreign policy. But that work would begin by bringing on board people who would challenge this tradition, not those who have been complicit in creating it and are bound to continue advancing it.

***Jeremy Scahill** pledges to be the same journalist under an Obama administration that he was during Bill Clinton and George Bush's presidencies. He is the author of Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army and is a frequent contributor to The Nation and Democracy Now! He is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at the Nation Institute.*

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