Foreign Affairs

It was a year marked by an exciting presidential election, which produced a new administration that took office in the midst of a global financial crisis and mounting tensions in the greater Middle East. In its six issues, stretching from May/June 2008 to July/August 2009, Foreign Affairs published twenty-six articles on America’s role in the world, eighteen articles on the financial/economic crisis, and seventeen articles on the various tensions of the greater Middle East.

The world awaiting President Barack Obama was the focus of major essays by Fareed Zakaria, Richard N. Haass, Henry M. Paulson Jr., Richard Holbrooke, and Condoleezza Rice. Leslie H. Gelb, in an excerpt from his book, Power Rules, championed pragmatic problem solving to reverse the decline of the United States as a nation and a world power. Anne-Marie Slaughter described why America will still have an edge in a networked world. And John Newhouse exposed the growing and often harmful influence on U.S. policy of lobbyists for foreign entities.

Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid depicted the challenges rising in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Fotina Christia and Michael Semple proposed co-opting “moderate” Taliban followers as essential to stabilizing Afghanistan. Akbar Ganji drew an illuminating picture of power politics in Iran, and Mohsen M. Milani followed with an assessment of Iran’s goals. Martin Indyk and Richard Haass assessed what Washington can and cannot do to assist peacemaking in the Middle East. Walter Russell Mead called for greater attention to Palestinian needs as central to any successful peace effort. Bernard Lewis provided a long view of the Arab world’s prospects in the twenty-first century, Bruce Hoffman weighed the remaining threat of al-Qaeda, and Eva Bellin tackled the question, “Can the Middle East democratize?”

Roger C. Altman enumerated the stark geopolitical consequences of the financial/economic crisis, Ian Bremmer documented the rise of state
capitalism, and C. Fred Bergsten explained the importance of U.S.-China cooperation to economic recovery. Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal endorsed engagement with China but with limits based on clear differences of values and interests. David G. Victor and Michael L. Ross counseled how to handle the frictions stemming from volatile oil prices.

On other topics, Robert D. Kaplan targeted the Indian Ocean as the coming center of rivalry between China and India with the United States as the critical balancer. Robert M. Gates proposed major alterations in the Pentagon’s budget and practices to better prepare American forces for asymmetric challenges from state and nonstate actors. Andrew Krepinevich wrote that too much is spent on big weapons systems and not enough on counterinsurgency, special forces, and nation-building. Stephen Sestanovich defined the right balance between cooperating and pushing back that should characterize U.S. policy toward a testy Russia. Yoichi Funabashi warned that the United States must deepen its commitments in Asia, with particular attention to multilateral institution-building.

Several essays addressed changes in America’s foreign policy institutions. J. Anthony Holmes proposed steps for strengthening the foreign service, and Ivo Daalder and I. M. Destler did the same for the National Security Council.

*Foreign Affairs* has not been immune to the economic downturn that has severely hurt the magazine industry, and newsstand sales have begun to show signs of softening. Nonetheless, Publisher David Kellogg reported that paid circulation for calendar year 2008 reached a record 161,800, up from 160,900 in 2007, and the number of subscribers, representing the bulk of the magazine’s circulation, has held steady through the first half of 2009. At a time when advertising revenues have dropped significantly, *Foreign Affairs*’ advertising has declined only slightly.

The magazine’s new website, *ForeignAffairs.com*, launched in March, promises to expand our audience and strengthen subscription sales. ForeignAffairs.com offers daily refreshed Web-only content that includes roundtable discussions, annotated reading lists, op-ed length essays, and user comments. In addition, one-third of the contents of each bimonthly issue of the print magazine is now accessible online for free. The remaining two-thirds, as well as the magazine’s archives, are available free to subscribers and for a fee to other readers.

Managing Editor Gideon Rose singled out three Web-only features that extend and complement the print material. Reading Lists are annotated syllabus modules that provide recommendations for exploring article topics further. Postscripts are updates by authors that revisit previously published articles in light of current developments. And Q&As are online interviews that give readers the chance to interact directly with authors. In short, the new website has allowed *Foreign Affairs* to respond quickly and flexibly to developing news.

In the fall of 2008, the magazine introduced its first event series to connect subscribers with authors and editors in a lively public forum. “*Foreign Affairs Live*” has drawn large audiences and created new sponsorship opportunities for advertisers. Digital subscriptions to the magazine are now available on Amazon’s Kindle, and planned innovations include revenue-producing Web features such as audio and digital editions as well as new online resources for use in the classroom.