The American Foreign Policy Transition: Barack Obama in Power

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Why President Obama is the Jon Snow of American foreign policy. Barack Obama’s foreign policy legacy, considered. From left, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Obama, during a joint ratification ceremony of the Paris climate change agreement ahead of the Group of 20 Summit in Hangzhou, China, on Sept. 3, 2016. (Pool photo by How Hwee Young via Reuters). Barack Obama’s foreign policy has come under sustained criticism during his second term. While no set of policies and actual achievements by a national leader will be beyond reproach, in this article I make the case that Obama has been a truly exceptional steward of U.S. foreign affairs. In a nutshell, he has provided wise and moral leadership, tempered with political realism. He has pursued worthy and important goals, and achieved a great deal, advancing core U.S. national interests. Obama has said that his foreign-policy ideas defy traditional categories and ideologies. Photographs by Martin Schoeller / August. Barack Obama came to Washington just six years ago, having spent his professional life as a part-time lawyer, part-time law professor, and part-time state legislator in Illinois. As an undergraduate, he took courses in history and international relations, but neither his academic life nor his work in Springfield gave him an especially profound grasp of foreign affairs. In her twenties, Power had reported from the Balkans and witnessed the campaigns of ethnic cleansing there. In 2002, after graduating from Harvard Law School, she wrote "A Problem from Hell," which surveyed the grim history of six genocides committed in the twentieth century.