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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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To: H
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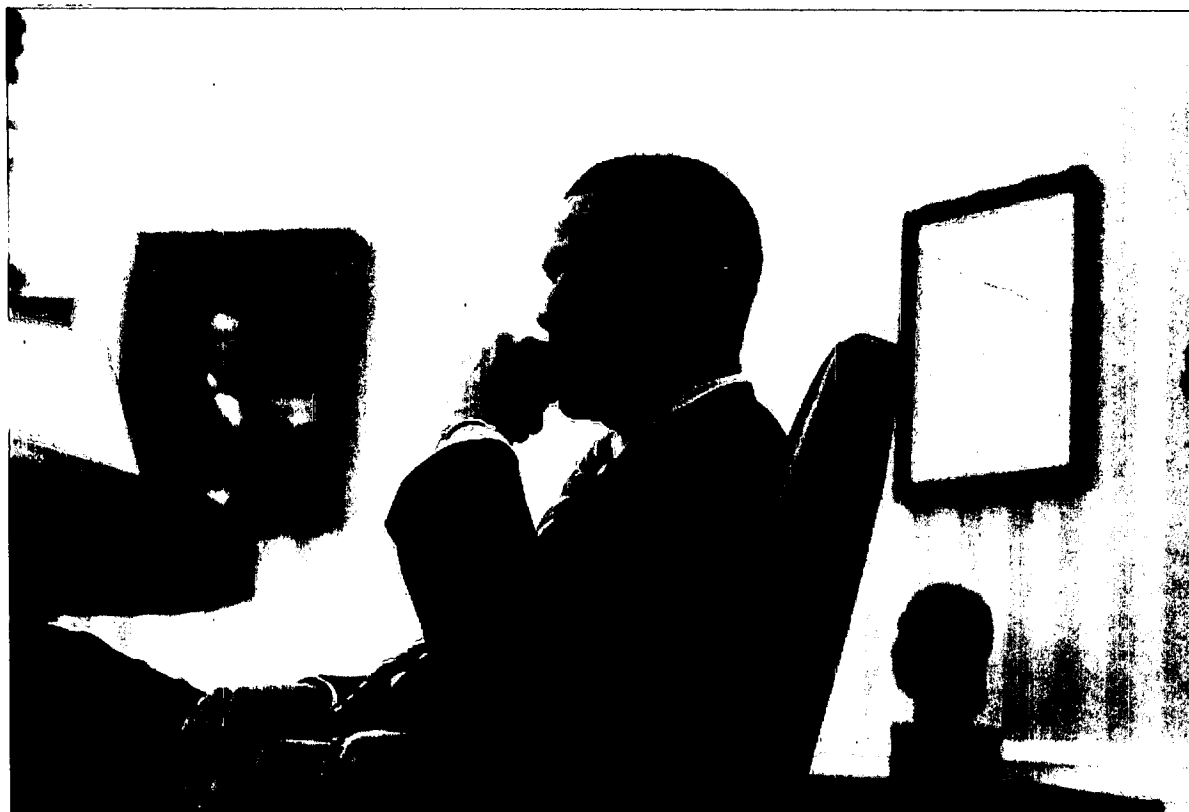
From: Rhodes, Benjamin J. [mailto:]
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<http://swampland.time.com/2012/01/18/president-obama-romney-foreign-policy-attacks-will-wither-in-serious-debate/>

President Obama: Romney Foreign Policy Attacks Will Wither in 'Serious Debate'

By [Michael Scherer](#) | [@michaelscherer](#) | January 18, 2012 | [±](#)
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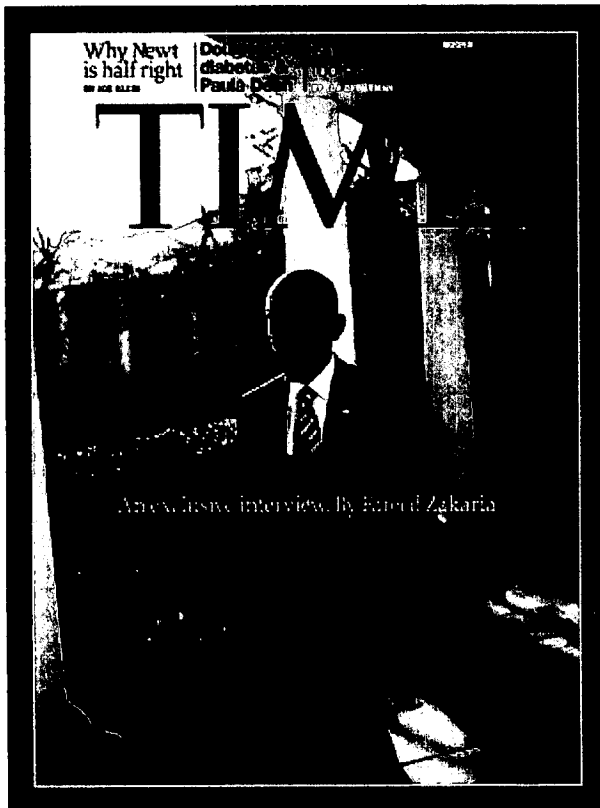


Christopher Morris / VII for TIME

U.S. President Obama at the White House, Washington D.C., on January 17, 2

President Obama dismissed Republican rival Mitt Romney's critiques of his foreign policy credentials Wednesday in an exclusive TIME interview, saying the GOP frontrunner's attacks are little more than primary posturing that will wither under the glare of "a serious debate."

"I think Mr. Romney and the rest of the Republican field are going to be playing to their base until the primary season is over," Obama told TIME's Fareed Zakaria during a White House interview that will appear in the next issue of TIME magazine. "Overall, I think it's going to be pretty hard to argue that we have not executed a strategy over the last three years that has put America in a stronger position than it was than when I came into office."



Christopher Morris--VII for TIME

In what sometimes sounded like a dry run of the Obama reelection campaign's foreign policy themes, the president drew sharp contrasts between himself and GOP leaders, past and present. He spoke with pride of accomplishing what he called a "pivot" from the policies of George W. Bush. This included ending the Iraq War, increasing pressure on Al Qaeda, rebuilding international alliances, and refocusing America's foreign policy goals.

"It's an American leadership that recognizes the rise of countries like China, India and Brazil," Obama said of his own policies. "It's a U.S. leadership that recognizes our limits in terms of resources and capacity. And yet, what I think we've been able to establish is a clear belief among other nations that the United States continues to be the one indispensable nation in tackling major international problems."

Obama also blamed Republicans in Congress for threatening to weaken America's international position by failing to agree to domestic policies that the White House has been advocating over the last year. "Our whole foreign policy has to be anchored in economic strength here at home," Obama said. "And if we are not strong, stable, growing, making stuff, training our work force so that it's the most skilled in the world, maintaining our lead in innovation, in basic research, in basic science, in the quality of our universities, in the transparency of our financial sector, if we don't maintain the upward mobility and equality of opportunity that underwrites our

politically stability and makes us a beacon for the world, then our foreignpolicy leadership will diminish as well.”

In particular, Obama praised the bipartisan fiscal commission, also known as Simpson-Bowles, for providing a clear and workable model for compromise, even if he disagreed on some of the specifics. He dismissed charges that he had abandoned the framework for his own agenda, and blamed Republicans for standing in the way. “The only reason it hasn’t happened is because the Republicans were unwilling to do anything on revenue,” Obama said. “Zero. Zip. Nada. The revenues that we were seeking were far less that what was in Simpson-Bowles. We’ve done more discretionary cuts than was called for in Simpson-Bowles.”

“There’s no equivalence between Democratic and Republican positions when it comes to deficit reduction,” Obama continued. “If we can get any Republicans to show any serious commitment, not vague commitments—not ‘we’ll get revenues because of tax reform somewhere in the future, but we don’t know exactly what that looks like, and we can’t identify a single tax that we would allow to go up’—but if we can get any of them, who are still in office as opposed to retired, to commit to that, we’ll be able to reduce our deficit.”

On the campaign trail, Romney has pointedly attacked Obama for carrying out “an appeasement strategy” that “apologizes for America.” “He believes America’s role as leader in the world is a thing of the past. I believe a strong America must – and will – lead the future,” Romney said after winning the New Hampshire primary. Several Republican candidates have argued that Obama does not embrace the notion of American exceptionalism.

In the interview, Obama pointedly dismissed that critique. “I think there is a strong belief that we continue to be a superpower unique perhaps in the annals of history that is not only self-interested but is also thinking about how to create a set of international rules and norms that everyone can follow, everyone can benefit from,” Obama said.

The president did acknowledge that despite his foreign policy successes, not everything had gone according to plan. “We still have huge challenges ahead and one thing I’ve learned over the last three years is that as much as you’d like to guide events, stuff happens,” Obama said. “And you have to respond, and those responses, no matter how effective your diplomacy or your foreign policy, are sometimes going to produce less than optimal results. But our overall trajectory, our overall strategy, has been very successful.”

When asked about Romney’s assertion that Iran would get a nuclear weapon if Obama won reelection, Obama responded directly. “I have made myself clear since I began running for the presidency that we will take every step available to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon,” he said. “Can we guarantee that Iran takes the smarter path? No, which is why I’ve repeatedly said we don’t take any options off the table in preventing them from getting a nuclear weapon.”

The interview will appear in the January 30 issue of TIME, which will be released online Thursday for all access subscribers.

Read more: <http://swampland.time.com/2012/01/18/president-obama-romney-foreign-policy-attacks-will-wither-in-serious-debate/#ixzz1jqjGSyiT>