

a. Who has President-elect Obama selected to fill the roles of secretary of state, national security advisor and defense secretary?

Senator Hillary Clinton, as the rival turned secretary of state; Gen. James L. Jones, the former NATO commander, as national security adviser, and Robert M. Gates, the current and future defense secretary.

b. According to the article, what are some of the elements of the Obama administration's foreign policy vision?

To rebuild Afghanistan in order to hopefully create a lasting peace when America pulls out.

c. What do you think the anonymous advisor means when he says that the three key foreign policy nominees have embraced "a rebalancing of America's national security portfolio"?

That they understand that things must change, and that America cannot win in places like Afghanistan by force alone.

d. What criticism does the Obama team expect?

Probably criticism from people who believe that the war should go on in Afghanistan, and that we are winning there.

e. What wisdom does Secretary Gates bring to the post of defense secretary?

He has been in Vietnam and many other wars, and firmly believes that America's strategy must change.

f. Why does it make sense to keep Secretary Gates in this position for the present?

Because he is very knowledgeable, and we need his knowledge right now.

g. According to General Jones, why are we not winning in Afghanistan?

After nearly seven years of fighting, we have failed to develop a strategy that could dependably bring reconstruction projects and other assistance into areas from which the Taliban had been routed — making each victory a temporary one, reversed as soon as forces depart.

h. What kind of shift is needed to win in a place like Afghanistan?

A shift to rebuild and strengthen, instead of going in with guns blazing.

i. Why is this more easily said than done?

The building projects and job-creation activities that Mr. Bush promised in 2002, soon after the invasion, and then again in late 2005, have ground to a halt in many parts of the country because the security situation has made it too dangerous for the State Department's "provincial reconstruction teams" to operate.

j. How is diplomacy different from the kinds of action Bush has taken abroad?

Well, Mr Bush has gone with a military push to try to take Afghanistan, but President-Elect Obama wants to talk to people and try to create peace.

k. What challenges does the Obama administration face in implementing its brand of diplomacy?

Quite a few. People at home may not be happy that they are negotiating with the people in Afghanistan. People in Afghanistan may not want to negotiate. We'll have to see!