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## Quick Rundown on Obama's Priorities

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**Promises vs. Reality:** President-elect Barack Obama has been elected by 63 million American voters and he has been elected to promote and safeguard America's national interest -- not Pakistan's. America's presidential campaign 2008 is over and now it's realpolitik all the way. Obama seeks to change America -- and change the world. How much of a change can Obama really bring about? On the domestic stage, Obama has promised programs -- universal health care, for instance -- that require a lot of additional government spending. Now that the campaign is over, Obama cannot increase government spending and balance the budget at the same time. Or else, he would have to raise taxes across the board and that would further slow down the economy just when America is already in a recession. How much change can Obama really bring about in the direction of the US economy? Not much; because America is already going through its worst recession in a hundred years and then there is the Congress that firmly controls all government taxation and spending decisions. In essence, America's fiscal policy -- taxation and spending -- is the consequence of a series of compromises between the White House and the Congress.

**Monetary Policy:** It is true that the Democratic Party has increased its majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate but how much of a change can Obama really bring about in America's rate of interest or its money supply? Not much; because of America's current state of near-depression and then there's the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 that insulates the "conduct of monetary policy from political interference.

**Power Centers:** America is a nation-state with multiple centers of power. Yes, the White House is the most potent of all centers of power but there is the Department of State, Department of Defense, the intelligence community, security apparatus, the media, the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. In essence, America's foreign policy is the consequence of an extended interaction between all these centers of power.

**Foreign Policy Priorities:** The new White House has its new vision and at least three ingredients of that vision were put forward during the campaign. They are: withdrawal from Iraq, to fight the real war in Afghanistan and to counter a resurging Russia.

**Iraq:** Obama cannot unilaterally withdraw from Iraq because that would mean Iraq's near-complete domination

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by Iran and that domination will be acceptable neither to America nor to America's allies like Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey. Now, that could mean a real dialogue between Iran and the new White House. Moving into the dialogue direction, a compromise between Iran and the "Great Satan" could be possible but highly improbable (the term was first used by Ruhollah Khomeini in his speech on November 5, 1979).

**Afghanistan:** Next is the war in Afghanistan. Obama considers the war in Afghanistan as the real war. Currently, America has only one combat brigade deployed in Afghanistan (compared to 15 combat brigades in Iraq). If Afghanistan is the "real war" then Obama would have to send in additional combat brigades. But in reality, the US army is fully deployed and additional combat brigades can only be sent to Afghanistan if the troop strength in Iraq is brought down (or if NATO contributes more troops). On top of that, Obama has said time and again that he would strike deep into Pakistani territory if he had the right intelligence.

**Russia:** And to countering a resurging Russia; America's National Defense Strategy opened up so many fronts that it failed to take into account a resurging Russia. On August 8, Russia sneaked through the window of opportunity that America had left open -- and invaded Georgia. What is Obama going to do about it? Well, Obama will seek to revive NATO's military awe but Germany, Britain, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Belgium and Italy all under severe financial constraints.

Obama's war cries may just fall on deaf ears. The realities both at home and foreign lands will keep challenging the promises that the President Elect had made during one of the most heated presidential elections in the world's history.