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"Change we can believe in" (Obama, 2008). Enunciating this theme as his campaign slogan, Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election. After a controversial period in US foreign policy under President George W. Bush, the Obama administration appeared to promise crucial changes in US foreign policy (Singh, 2012a; McCormick, 2014). At that time, however, Lynch and Singh (2008) suggested that Bush's foreign and security policy was likely to be continued by his successors. Indeed, far from wholesale reversal, Obama has been accused of implementing a foreign policy which is essentially the same as that initiated by Bush, replicating and even reinforcing Bush's strategies (Indyk et al., 2012a; Scott-Smith, 2012; Shea, 2012; Singh, 2012b; Bentley and Holland, 2013a; Ledwidge, 2014). This essay will discuss whether Obama has delivered change or continuity in US counterterrorism and security policy, and will argue that Obama has essentially continued with Bush's foreign policy, working within the framework inherited from him, but that he has also proved to promote change in some areas and approaches. Firstly, it will be suggested that Obama's foreign policy is essentially characterized by its continuity with that of Bush, providing certain examples and examining the reasons that may have led to that continuity. Secondly, it will be argued that, nevertheless, there is a change in the way of approaching to the framework of the War on Terror inherited from Bush. It has to be emphasized that this essay will discuss the counterterrorism and security sphere of US foreign policy, hence the term foreign policy will always refer to these particular areas.

As stated above, this section will argue that Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy is primarily characterized by an inherent continuity with that implemented by his predecessor George W. Bush. Firstly, this statement will be discussed, emphasizing the continuity with the War on Terror, which is visible in the Afghanistan War. Then, the reasons that might have made difficult enact change in US foreign policy will be examined. A great body of literature suggests an evident continuity between Bush and Obama with regard to counterterrorism and national security policies (Crocker, 2010; Keridis, 2012; Rockman, 2012; Skinner, 2012; Shea, 2014). Hemmer (2011) and Lindsay (2011) note that, even though certain strategies and approaches may differ from one administration to the other, both Bush and Obama share core values that shape their foreign policies: the defence of American national interests, the US global leadership, and the emphasis on a war against the terrorist axis of Al-Qaeda and its supporters. Indeed, as Klaidman (2012) observes, that the language of the "Global War on Terror" established by Bush has been replaced by one of "transnational global conflict" does not mean that the War on Terror has actually been brought to an end. On the contrary, the underlying policy drivers of such war remain the same, and America's national and security interests continue shaping US foreign policy and providing the justification for an exceptionalist interpretation of international law (Burkemann, 2009; Indyk et al., 2012b; Aaronson, 2013).

A notable example of Obama's continuity with Bush's foreign policy and, thus, with the War on Terror —or "transnational global conflict"— is the war in Afghanistan (Singh, 2014). Far from its abandonment, the Obama administration has implemented a more precise prosecution of a renamed War on Terror in Afghanistan (Klaidman, 2012). Reinforcing Bush's determination to dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda, Obama (2009a) justified this war arguing that intervention was still needed to prevent Al-Qaeda from operating freely in Afghanistan. As Mann (2012) states, his commitment to continue with the Afghanistan War initiated by Bush is evident in the "surge" of 30,000 additional US troops to this war. This policy choice (a "surge strategy"), in turn, seems closely aligned to Bush's "surge" in Iraq in early 2007; indeed, General David Petraeus, who conducted the surge strategy in Iraq for the Bush administration,

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was also appointed to lead this strategy, which reflects a higher degree of continuity between both administrations (Jones, 2011; Singh, 2012b; McCormick, 2014; Miller, 2016). More importantly, according to Aaronson (2013), the reasons that led Obama to justify this surge coincide with certain principles at the core of Bush's foreign policy: the protection of the US security and the defence of American national interest. Thus, with the objective of preventing any future acts of terrorism against the US, Obama has resumed the war initiated by Bush in Afghanistan against those involved in the 9/11 attacks, reserving, as his predecessor, the right to act unilaterally (Obama, 2009b; Aaronson, 2013). As Sanger (2012) notes, Obama seems not to have rejected the strategic necessity of Bush's response to 9/11 in Afghanistan; in fact, he might have made this response more aggressive. Another significant example of the continuity delivered by President Obama in US foreign policy is the use of drones in the war against Al-Qaeda. Obama has even been accused of giving an excessive emphasis to this practice established by his predecessor (Guerlain, 2014). As Aslam (2013) notes, whereas there were only nine drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004 to 2007, there were 111 in 2010 alone.

Once observed an apparent continuity of Obama's foreign policy with that implemented by George W. Bush, now the issue arises of why a president elected on a platform of change has delivered such degree of continuity in US foreign policy; thus, this paper now moves on to address the reasons why change has been hard to implement for the Obama administration. Firstly, the possibility that Obama was ideologically opposed to implementing greater change from the outset, in other words, that Obama did not want to implement any substantial change should be considered. According to McCrisken (2011), Obama never intended wholesale reversal of Bush's foreign policy; on the contrary, his objective was to deepen Bush's commitment to counterterrorism while bringing the distraction of the Iraq war to an end. Indeed, McCrisken (2013) notes that Obama has been consistent with his rhetoric and the programme foreshadowed in his pre-election speeches. If these are analysed, it seems evident that Obama did not seek to achieve great change, but end "the excesses of the Bush administration" (Obama, 2007a); in other words, Obama did not promise the end of the War on Terror, but a new manner of fighting and confronting threats within this war (Carafano, 2014): "I am running for President to lead this country in a new direction. Instead of being distracted from the pressing threats we face, I want to overcome them" (Obama, 2008b). It could be observed, therefore, that Obama fostered a perception of change amongst voters that was greater than his actual intentions. Likewise, on taking office, his rhetoric continued on the same course, even deepening the commitment to work within a renamed War on Terror, and making appeals to war as justification for the continuation of the campaign in Afghanistan (McCrisken, 2013). After a year in office, for instance, Obama (2009b) stated: "I face the world as it is. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. So yes, the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace. […] War is sometimes necessary". Thus, Holland (2013a) argues that, on becoming president, Obama was increasingly converted to the cause and rationale of Bush-era counterterrorism policy.

Secondly, having proposed that Obama might have wanted to deliver continuity with Bush's foreign policy, it may now be considered that he could not deliver change, as he seems to have been limited in several ways. As Holland (2013a) argues, one of this limitations emerges because Obama failed to appreciate the demands of holding the office whilst campaigning, and adjusted accordingly once elected. On becoming president, Obama may have been aware of how difficult change is to achieve, and has failed to realise the change he sought (Scott-Smith, 2014). The inability to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay could exemplify this issue. Obama was elected having campaigned to close the facility within his first year in office, however, it still functions today; even though the number of detainees at Guantanamo has considerably decreased, Obama's promises of change have obviously been limited in their realisation (Korte and Vanden Brook, 2016). As Crook (2009) and Yin (2010) claim, closing Guantanamo was easier to promise than to accomplish; in any case, Obama's inability to shut the facility seems to represent the continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations.

Another limitation that might have made difficult enact change is the institutionalisation of the War on Terror in US foreign policy. In other words, Bush could have created such a pervasive foreign policy that Obama is entrapped, constrained by culture, identity, and discourse, and unable to break out of the policies, expectations and ideas associated with the War on Terror (Boyle, 2011; Holland, 2012, 2013b; Bentley and Holland, 2013b; Elridge, 2013; Holland and Jarvis, 2014). The policy programme following the War on Terror has affected political, economic and social aspects of life in the US, favouring a visible institutionalisation of the war (Jackson, 2005; Croft, 2006; Holland, 2012). This institutionalisation has had, for example, an obvious impact on the level of defence expenditure. As

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Holland (2013a) illustrates, Bush conducted a great increase in defence spending and reoriented it in order to fight the threats of the War on Terror. This refocusing of American finances around the effort to defeat "terror" seems difficult for Obama to pull back from (Bentley and Holland, 2013b). Furthermore, the institutionalisation of the War on Terror in counterterrorism practices has been achieved thanks to the great significance of the discourses that underpin it. Zalman and Clarke (2009) state that the US has developed a narrative, in which it conducts a worldwide campaign against Islamic extremism. This discourse, in turn, remains in relevant branches of the US government, and Obama has seen himself forced to remain within the mainstream of this American discourse on foreign policy (Quinn, 2011, 2013). Simultaneously, according to Jackson (2011, 2013) and Parmar (2011), this narrative has been embedded in American popular culture. Obama cannot ignore the culture of fear promoted by Bush when implementing any aspect of counterterrorism policy; thus, the frames of fear that he has inherited limit him (Bentley, 2011, 2013). Obama has, therefore, seemed to be trapped within the parameters of Bush's construction of 9/11 and the War on Terror, choosing to modify, rather than overhaul, the fundamentals of this war (Solomon, 2012, 2013). After this analysis, it could be fathomed that US foreign policy is likely to be resistant to transformation, as the imperatives on which it rests are broadly acknowledged (Lynch, 2011). Since 9/11, it has widely accepted that the US is at war with a terrorist network, which necessitates the occupation of those territories perceived as bases for the enemy (Gerges, 2013). Therefore, as Lynch (2012) argues, possible disputes over recent US foreign policy are likely to be over tactical calibrations, but not over essential disagreements.

So far, this paper has argued that Obama's foreign policy reflects an apparent continuity with that of Bush: Obama appears to work within the framework of the War on Terror, reinforcing the war against the terrorist network of Al-Qaeda and stressing the defence of the American national interest. However, it would be an error to assert that the foreign policy implemented by Obama lacks any change and is a mere continuation of Bush's strategy. The following section will argue that Obama's foreign policy implies a change in the focus and approach to the War on Terror, differing from the strategy released by Bush by offering a distinct view of the international threat environment, and acknowledging the limits of American resources (Brzezinski, 2010; Hemmer, 2011). The first change in the manner of approaching to the War on Terror is linked to Obama's conception that American resources are limited. As Hemmer (2011) argues, Obama has never rejected the idea that the US is at war, but the idea that this war is against terrorism understood as a tactic. Instead, Obama has reasoned that the US is at war against a specific network, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates; thus, narrowing the scope of the war has allowed Obama to limit US expenditures and manage American resources in a more appropriate way to defeat a precise enemy. Obama has, therefore, accepted the framework of the War on terror, but his strategy has sought to fight against a more concrete rival (Aaronson, 2013). Likewise, according to Rahawestri (2010), change also seems evident in the focus given to the war in the Middle East. Whereas Bush appeared to seek the democratization of the Middle East and the reformation of Arab civilization, Obama has preferred to solve security problems than to transform the societies which created them (Sanger, 2012). Whereas Bush believes that the lack of democracy is likely to lead to instability, Obama reasons that externally promoted democratization may lead to the same outcome (Katz, 2010). Moreover, Stephens (2015) notes that Obama's rejection of the preventive use of force in Iraq, as the following paragraph shows, implies another considerable change in the way that the Obama administration has faced the War on Terror.

Indeed, Obama's strategy in the Iraq War supposes a new manner of approaching to the already established War on Terror (Aaronson, 2013; McCormick, 2014). From the outset, Obama opposed the Iraq War, as it was considered to divert America's attention away from the region in which US interests were most engaged: the Af-Pak border (Obama, 2007b). The Obama administration believed that Bush's intervention in Iraq was excessively costly and unnecessarily reduced the resources available for the war in Afghanistan (Hynek, 2009). Furthermore, as Katz (2010) observes, the US interventions in Iraq did not prevent the spread of radical Islamist activity either. Given these arguments and Obama's vision that the US possesses limited resources, Obama conducted a pragmatic shift in Iraq-oriented to withdraw the US troops from there and redeploy them to fight in the first front of the War on Terror, Afghanistan (Burke, 2011). As Ondrejcsák (2009) argues, for Obama, Iraq seemed a mere distraction from the real war that the US had to wage in Afghanistan, the centre of the War on Terror. In this way, the American soldiers in Iraq were gradually pulled from there, while the soldiers remaining as a "transition component" completed various tasks such as battling terrorist cells and training Iraqi security forces (Hemmer, 2011). As Katz (2010) notes, with the withdrawal from Iraq, Obama attempted to improve the undermined US relations with its allies and provide additional resources for the war against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Whether Obama's strategy was successful or not has

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generated much debate. The Iraqi conflict was far from over when the US troops withdrew from the region, and stabilization was not achieved, which might have served as the basis for the rise of ISIS (Wechsler et al., 2016). What seems obvious is that Obama has delivered strategic change in this respect: the priority of Iraq has decreased, and most American attention, troops, and finances have been redirected towards Afghanistan (Jacobson, 2010).

Throughout this essay, an analysis of the degree of change and continuity delivered by President Obama in US foreign policy has been conducted. On the one hand, it has been argued that, in terms of counterterrorism and security policy, the Obama administration has essentially continued with the policy implemented by George W. Bush. Far from abandoning the War on Terror, Obama has worked within it, and the defence of the American national interests has shaped his policies. The war in Afghanistan, the use of drones against Al-Qaeda, and his inability to close Guantanamo have proved to be elements of continuity with the previous administration. Furthermore, several reasons that may explain the difficulty which Obama has experienced to enact change have been examined. It has firstly been considered that Obama might not have wanted to deliver any change with regard to the counterterrorism policy initiated by Bush. Then, it has been suggested that Obama has not been able to promote change in US foreign policy due to two significant reasons: first, he may have had to adjust to the demands of holding office once elected, hence he has not been able to accomplish all his promises; second, he seems to have been constrained by the institutionalisation of the War on Terror in US foreign policy. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that the Obama administration has also promoted change in, at least, the way of approaching to the War on Terror: a change in the focus of the war, as the case of Iraq confirms. In any case, in terms of counterterrorism policy, it may be erroneous to claim that Obama's foreign policy is only characterized by either change or continuity with that of his predecessor; indeed, Obama seems to have delivered both continuity, in the substance, and change, in the focus, in US foreign policy.

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Written by: Javier Martín Merchán
Written at: University of Surrey
Written for: Mr. Ciaran Gillespie
Date written: June 2016