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BAMA'S CABINET



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Crisis Committee

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Committee
Obama's Cabinet, 2011



Georgia Tech
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LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

My name is Ashrith Narayan and I am delighted to welcome you to TechMun 2025! This is my first year doing Model UN and my first time being a crisis director and I'm very excited for the ride!

Welcome to the new year of 2011, where Barack Obama is entering his third year as president. As members of his cabinet, you will have to work to ensure several pressing issues. How does the president determine his responses to domestic crises such as the fallout of the Great Recession and the backlash to the Affordable Care Act? How should the government address foreign policy issues like the continuing War on Terror and the Arab Spring revolts? With this committee, our intention is to rewind history and observe it through a new lens and see how your decisions have new and far-reaching impacts.

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As you read this background guide, remember some things. While this committee allows the rewriting of history, it must remain historically accurate. Advancements in technology can be researched and introduced but fantastical elements are not permitted.

Now my fellow Americans, be prepared to debate and deliberate, as your choices may impact the country- and the entire world.

*Sincerely,
Ashrith and President Obama*

Ashrith Narayan
Crisis Director, Obama's Cabinet, 2011





Terms to Know

Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) - a U.S. healthcare reform law aimed at expanding health insurance coverage, reducing costs, and improving healthcare quality through provisions like Medicaid expansion, insurance marketplaces, and protections for pre-existing conditions.

Afghanistan War - a conflict initiated by the United States and its allies in 2001 to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban from power following the September 11 attacks, that has evolved into a prolonged effort to combat insurgency and build a stable Afghan state.

Arab Spring - A series of pro-democracy protests and uprisings across the Middle East. The movement began in Tunisia and spread outward to Syria, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. While democratization efforts worked in some countries, the authoritarian nature of others intensified leading to an even more tense situation in the Middle East.

Great Recession - a severe global economic downturn triggered by the collapse of the U.S. housing market, financial institution failures, and the resulting credit crisis.

Iraq War - a conflict initiated by a U.S.-led coalition in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, based on claims of weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorism.

Terms to Know

Osama Bin Laden - the founder of al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Patriot Act - a U.S. law enacted in 2001 to enhance national security by expanding surveillance powers, facilitating information sharing, and strengthening measures to prevent and respond to terrorism, often sparking debates over privacy and civil liberties.

War on Terror - the global military, political, and ideological campaign launched by the United States and its allies after the September 11, 2001, attacks to combat terrorism, primarily targeting extremist groups like al-Qaeda and later ISIS.

White House Situation Room - a secure, high-tech conference and intelligence management center in the West Wing, used by the President and national security advisors to monitor and respond to crises in real time.



Introduction

Welcome to Barack Obama's Cabinet in April 2011. For many of us, the time was marked by iPhone 3s, Rolling in the Deep, Disney's Tangled, and schoolyard fads like Silly Bandz. But this era was not so idyllic nor so simple. 2011 is a pivotal year, not so much because of many world changing events that occurred, but because of the continuation and developments of history leading up to it, and how even the "small things" are instrumental for the overall directions of history.

On the international side, Obama's cabinet has to deal with the continuation of the War on Terror and the sudden start of the Arab Spring that is gaining momentum across the region. The Middle East continues to be a hot-bed of political, social, and militaristic developments, and as the leader of the Western World, there are no ways to ignore the area. On another front, China also recently overtook Japan as the second largest economy in the world, an unsurprising development nonetheless, but its momentum is concerning and threatening to the comfort the US had as the top economy for so much of living memory. For many parts of the world, the economic issues from 2008 remain fresh in both their minds and their pockets.

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Domestically, it is impossible to avoid talks about the economy. Inheriting the Great Recession underneath the previous Bush administration, Obama has put the economy as one of the priorities of his administration. One of the most important factors to voters,

handling the economy well, is critical for Obama's popularity and potential reelection. There is no doubt the economy has improved since 2008, but the question remains whether it has improved enough?

Finally, up for reelection in 2012, Obama has a couple issues particularly fresh on his mind: Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the 2010 elections. Destined to be one of his main domestic accomplishments in his first presidency, the Affordable Care Act will forever be associated with his name, good or bad, through political opponents calling it "Obamacare." Tied directly to his presidency, the controversial legislation was also one of the main targets of political opponents' attacks; and paired with the dismal results of the 2010 elections, there is no doubt that there is a political crisis in Obama's hands as the 2012 presidential election creeps closer and closer. Although Obamacare passed, the political tension has not gone away. A year of uncertainty and developments, 2011 is a critical year for the Obama cabinet as they navigate crisis after crisis, all while being the most powerful group in the world.

Background

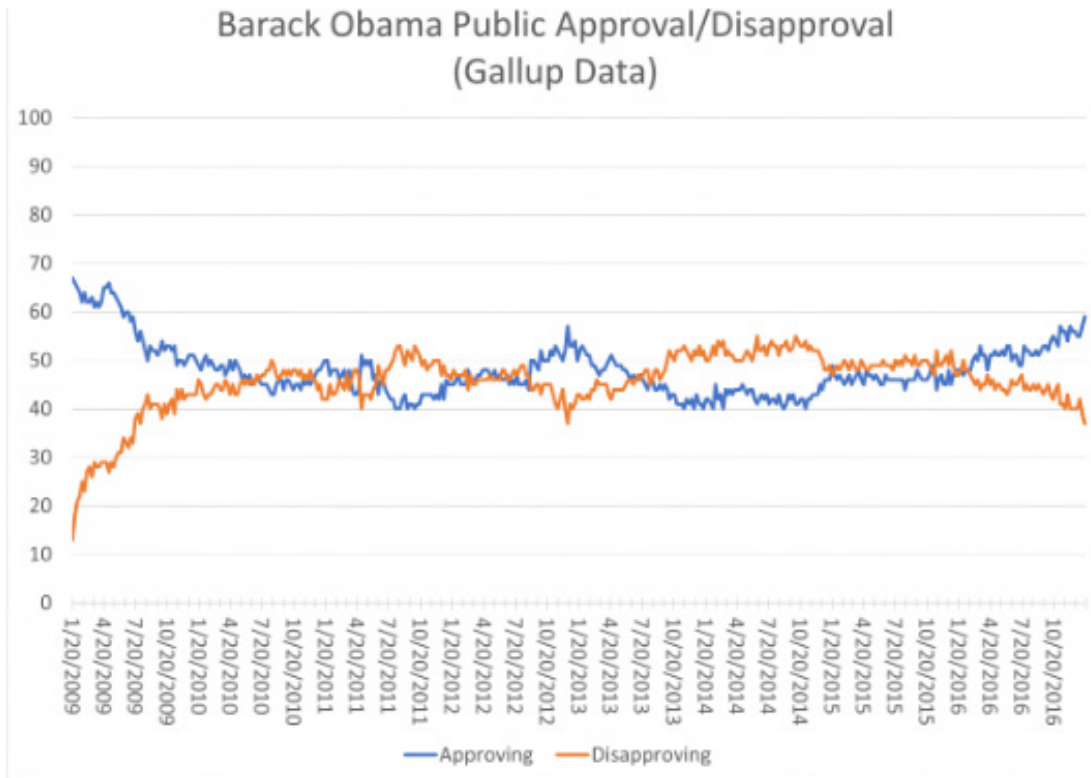
War on Terror

The War on Terror, a defining aspect of U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, saw its most prominent theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, the conflict began under the Bush administration to dismantle terrorist networks like al-Qaeda and the Taliban, foster democracy, and avenge the attacks on American soil. In 2009, President Obama increased U.S. troop levels by over 30,000, bringing the total to 68,000, with the hope of stabilizing the region and enabling a withdrawal by 2011. Now, with Osama bin Laden in US grasp, and the dream of a free Afghanistan within reach, the United States faces the critical challenge of transitioning to a role that ensures long-term stability and democratic governance in the region.

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Meanwhile, in Iraq, the war evolved from a counter-terrorism effort to a counter-insurgency mission. Following the removal and execution of Saddam Hussein in 2006, violence escalated, deepening the conflict. Under Obama's leadership, the focus began to shift toward peace talks and reducing active combat. By the end of his first term, U.S. casualties had declined, parliamentary elections had been held, and a new Iraqi government was established. With the original objectives of the war largely achieved, the administration turned its attention to orchestrating a responsible withdrawal, aiming to leave behind a nation capable of sustaining its hard-won progress.

At the same time, the Arab Spring ushered in widespread upheaval across the Middle East, presenting new questions for U.S. foreign policy. The Obama administration sought to support the region's democratic aspirations while safeguarding American interests and respecting international sovereignty. In Yemen, nearly \$500 million in U.S. aid since 2009 highlighted efforts to stabilize the nation. In Libya, strategic military support helped target figures like Muammar Gaddafi. However, these interventions underscored a broader dilemma: how can the United States effectively champion democracy in the Middle East while maintaining focus on domestic priorities and avoiding overreach? The balance between global leadership and homefront interests remains an enduring challenge for U.S. policymakers.



2008 Financial Crisis

Known as the Great Recession, the 2008 Financial Crisis dealt the most severe blow to the U.S. economy since the Great Depression. As the Obama administration worked to stabilize the economy, tensions were further exacerbated by the Occupy Wall Street movement—a 59-day left-wing protest highlighting economic inequality, corporate greed, and the outsized influence of money in politics. The Department of Homeland Security viewed these protests as a potential security concern due to their occasionally volatile nature.

To prevent another crisis on the scale of the Great Recession, President Obama signed the Dodd-Frank Act, which implemented sweeping financial reforms to limit the high-risk practices by banks that had contributed to the collapse. While the legislation addressed systemic vulnerabilities, public frustration toward both Wall Street and the federal government's handling of employment and wealth inequality remained high. With one of the world's foremost financial hubs under heavy criticism, the Obama

administration must navigate the delicate challenge of addressing concerns about government corruption and economic disparity, all while safeguarding the economic benefits that large banks and corporations provide.

Affordable Care Act

Known informally as Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law on March 23, 2010. This landmark piece of legislation represented a significant shift in domestic policy, introducing sweeping reforms to the insurance system and expanding women's health services. The Act aimed to distribute the costs and responsibilities of healthcare more equitably across the system, ensuring that care would be accessible and affordable for all Americans.

Public and political opinion on the ACA has been deeply divided. While many argue that it has already expanded access to healthcare and laid the groundwork for a more inclusive system, critics contend that its policies are too restrictive, overly complex, or insufficiently comprehensive. Others fear it may ultimately increase costs for citizens. As President Obama prepares for re-election, ensuring that this historic Act continues to meet the needs of the public while addressing political criticism from figures like Sarah Palin and Mitt Romney will be crucial to both its success and his own political future.

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Political Situation

Despite President Obama's initial popularity, voter dissatisfaction with the Obama administration's handling of the economy, particularly the 2009 economic stimulus package, as well as the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, passed in 2010 made Obama very unpopular among conservative voters. Also, the emergence of the Tea Party movement, a grassroots conservative movement that advocated for smaller government, lower taxes, and a reduction in federal spending, led to increased support for congressional Republicans. Due to this, the Democrats lost many seats in both chambers of Congress and lost control of the House of Representatives.

With the Republicans, who are determined to oppose Obama's policies and control the House, it is now much more difficult for President Obama to push through his legislative agendas. Therefore, it would be paramount for the Obama administration to improve its public image and win back control of Congress in the next major elections if they want anything substantial to be passed. President Obama is still very popular within the Democratic party and faces no significant challenges within the party for the presidency. On the Republicans' side, governor Mitt Romney is leading the republican race for President, but Senator Rick Santorum, Representative Ron Paul, and Speaker Newt Gingrich all currently have competitive support.

Starting Scenario

Entering the third year of President Obama's first term, numerous decisions must be made, both on the home front and abroad.

On the domestic side, the economy remains in turmoil following the Great Recession. While the markets have recovered, the fear of downslide is in everyone's minds. The Patriot Act, passed by President Bush nearly ten years ago remains on citizens' minds as the War on Terror drags on. The Affordable Care Act, hardly a year old, also concerns many, as it takes away from important health and security requirements for the people. The government has continued its expansions into space exploration, with the stars being closer than ever before. As technology has advanced, cybersecurity has become an incredibly important issue, on an individual, corporate, and federal level.

On the international stage, Obama and his administration's gaze is fixed on one man: Osama bin Laden. As the entire world watches, the president and his cabinet sit in the White House Situation Room, mere steps away from officially issuing the order to execute Operation Neptune Spear; and neutralize bin Laden.



Questions to Consider

1. What steps can be taken to strengthen an incredibly fragile economy? Should resources be devoted to immediately fixing such a major issue or can partial attention be focused elsewhere?

2. Is the War on Terror and the resulting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as necessary as previously deemed? Should the US make new decisions in terms of war?

3. Does US international policy infringe upon the sovereignty of foreign states?

4. Operation Neptune Spear is one button away from being executed. How should President Obama make that call? Should SEAL Team 6 move into Abbottabad or should America remain uninvolved?

5. Does the expansion of the Affordable Care Act violate the principles of America's constitution? Should taxpayer money be diverted to a group of people that are not largely contributing towards that fund?

6. What improvements or changes should the government make to better protect against cyber attacks? Is cybersecurity as big of a concern as many perceive it to be?

7. Is space exploration the next big step for the American people?

CHARACTERS

Joseph “Joe” Biden (Vice President)

- Second-highest executive officer and is first in the presidential line of succession. Their primary duties include presiding over the Senate, casting tie-breaking votes when necessary, and representing the President in diplomatic or ceremonial roles. Additionally, they support the administration’s agenda and can take on specific responsibilities as assigned by the President.

Eric Holder (Attorney General)

- The head of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and serves as the chief law enforcement officer of the federal government. Their primary responsibilities include enforcing federal laws, representing the United States in legal matters, overseeing federal prosecutors, and advising the President and executive departments on legal issues.

Gary Locke (Secretary of Commerce)

- Leads the Department of Commerce (DOC) and advises the President on commerce-related issues. The Secretary’s role is to promote economic growth, job creation, and technological competitiveness.

Leon Panetta (Director of the CIA)

- Leads the CIA and serves as the principal intelligence advisor to the President and the National Security Council. Their primary responsibilities include overseeing intelligence collection, analysis, and covert operations to inform national security decisions. The Director also ensures the agency’s activities align with U.S. laws and policy objectives.

Robert Gates (Secretary of Defense)

- Oversees the Department of Defense, serving as the principal advisor to the President on military and national security matters. Their responsibilities include formulating defense policies, managing the armed forces, and ensuring the readiness and security of the nation. They also coordinate military operations and strategy in collaboration with military leaders and allied nations.

Hilda Soliz (Secretary of Labor)

- Oversees the Department of Labor, which means they manage and enforce federal labor laws aimed at protecting workers' rights, ensuring safe working conditions, and promoting fair employment practices across the country; this includes issues like minimum wage, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, and unionization.

Thomas "Tom" Donilon (National Security Advisor)

- Serves as the chief advisor to the President on national security and foreign policy matters. Their primary duties include coordinating the National Security Council, providing intelligence briefings, and developing strategies to address security challenges. Unlike Cabinet positions, this role does not require Senate confirmation.

Hillary Clinton (Secretary of State)

- Chief foreign affairs officer of the United States, overseeing the Department of State and advising the President on international relations. Their primary duties include conducting diplomacy, negotiating treaties, representing the U.S. abroad, and managing foreign aid and policy initiatives. They also ensure the protection of U.S. citizens and interests worldwide.

Timothy Geithner (Secretary of the Treasury)

- Oversees the U.S. Department of the Treasury, managing federal finances, including the production of currency, collection of taxes, and issuance of government debt. They advise the President on economic policy, enforce financial laws, and play a key role in regulating financial institutions and combating financial crimes.

William M. Daley (White House Chief of Staff)

- The President's primary aide and manager of the White House staff. Their duties include overseeing the daily operations of the White House, managing the President's schedule, coordinating communication between the executive branch and Congress, and advising the President on key decisions. The Chief of Staff often acts as a gatekeeper, controlling access to the President and ensuring the smooth functioning of the administration.



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