

"Live-blogging" the "foreign policy debate"

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*I wasn't planning to post a running commentary on the final debate, since I don't follow foreign policy half as closely as the domestic stuff. But judging from the candidates' dodges and pivots last night, neither do they. So here I am. See also my posts on the debate where [Romney talked about domestic policy and Obama napped](#), the debate where [Ordinary Americans asked pre-vetted questions and didn't get answers](#), and the debate where [two Catholic running mates got asked about abortion since that's what Catholics care about](#).*

8:08. Obama: It was important to make sure no other Americans got killed in the Benghazi incident. It was even more important to go after the perpetrators, because being tough on terrorists is even more important than keeping Americans alive.

8:10. Romney doesn't want another Iraq or Afghanistan. He wants to build democracy in the region, a goal the U.S. would never, ever pursue via foreign invasion.

8:19. Romney and Obama agree on two crucial things: their mutual disdain, and virtually the entirety of their Syria policy. It's not clear, however, that Obama agrees that Iran can't get to the sea without going through Syria.

8:27. Romney: I wish that we--and by "we" I mean Obama, both after and before he took office--could have anticipated the Arab Spring and controlled it from the outside instead of allowing the people to bring it about on their own terms. Because we believe in democracy.

8:28. Romney: Let me take a step back and talk about the Middle East generally. And another, larger step back to talk about domestic policy.

8:29. Romney: "When there are elections, people tend to vote for peace." That's funny, I don't recall having a vote on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

8:31. Obama: America is "indispensable." Yeah, so was Rome once.

8:32. Obama shows that Romney's not the only one who can crudely pivot to the economy. Maybe the combination of a foreign-policy-focused debate and an economy-focused election means the Euro crisis will be a major theme tonight! Oh wait, I forgot that in the alternate reality of the presidential campaign, "the world" consists of the U.S. and the Middle East and "the economy" consists of rival visions of tax cuts.

8:34. Romney: I know how to make 12 million jobs. I'm not telling you a) how, or b) what this has to do with foreign policy.

8:35. Romney gets in a dig at the teachers unions. Take that, Obama administration! So in bed with the teachers unions.

8:37. The two candidates take a break from discussing their non-disagreement on foreign policy to discuss their non-disagreement on education. Inspiring stuff.

8:39. Romney: Come look at our website. If only there were a live venue for explaining your plans to the American people instead!

8:43. Like all governors challenging incumbents, Romney loves the line about how he's balanced budgets. He has! But [it's a red herring](#).

8:43. Romney: We can only fight one war at once? Bor-ing.

8:44. Obama takes the combative thing a few clicks too far with his prepared line about the navy.

8:46. Now it's time for another Israel-loving contest. It's been a few minutes since we've had one, and we wouldn't want the world to question our steadfastness.

8:48. Obama: Here's where we disagree. I think that premature military action would be premature. My opponent thinks that premature military action would be *post*-mature.

8:49. Romney keeps trying to find daylight between the two of them by saying Obama did the right thing but Romney would have done it sooner. Well, I think Dylan's great but I'd have started even younger.

8:57. Romney: "We're four years closer to a nuclear Iran." Fact: it's four years later than it was four years ago, and we're that much closer to whatever happens in the future.

9:00. It's official. Only women should moderate presidential debates.

9:03. We've reached the gloating-over-bin-Laden part of Obama's performance. You know, the part where he tells heartwarming stories about how Americans should and do find vengeance cathartic.

9:04. Obama: "My current vice president." Current?? Hillary for VP watch!!!

9:08. Obama: There's no reason Americans should die when Afghans could die instead. There's a lot of them, and they dress funny, and most of us don't even know them!

9:11. Romney: "It's important for the nuclear weapons." And we always have *their* interests in mind.

9:12. Another point of agreement: drones. Because [what could possibly go wrong?](#)

9:15. Schieffer: Let's talk about China. To that end, let me ask you an open-ended question, the answer to which likely is not about China.

9:18. Romney: War, protectionism, and other varieties of chaos. Those countries that enact a coherent industrial policy aimed at protecting their own businesses and workers? [Totally chaotic](#). Might as well be land mines everywhere.

9:21. My sister said during the last debate that she's going to be Romney's Label Maker for Halloween. If you end up at the same party she's at, I don't recommend manipulating any currency. You'll get big-time labelled, posthaste. If you must, my advice is to bring your own label for her: [Dollar Weakener](#).

9:29. Romney: You can't create jobs just by hiring teachers. Obama, why have you never [proposed a jobs bill](#)?