



Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power

Mark Landler

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The deeply reported story of two supremely ambitious figures, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—archrivals who became partners for a time, trailblazers who share a common sense of their historic destiny but hold very different beliefs about how to project American power

In *Alter Egos*, veteran *New York Times* White House correspondent Mark Landler takes us inside the fraught and fascinating relationship between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—a relationship that has framed the nation’s great debates over war and peace for the past eight years.

In the annals of American statecraft, theirs was a most unlikely alliance. Clinton, daughter of an anticommunist father, was raised in the Republican suburbs of Chicago in the aftermath of World War II, nourishing an unshakable belief in the United States as a force for good in distant lands. Obama, an itinerant child of the 1970s, was raised by a single mother in Indonesia and Hawaii, suspended between worlds and a witness to the less savory side of Uncle Sam’s influence abroad. Clinton and Obama would later come to embody competing visions of America’s role in the world: his, restrained, inward-looking, painfully aware of limits; hers, hard-edged, pragmatic, unabashedly old-fashioned.

Spanning the arc of Obama’s two terms, *Alter Egos* goes beyond the speeches and press conferences to the Oval Office huddles and South Lawn strolls, where Obama and Clinton pressed their views. It follows their evolution from bitter rivals to wary partners, and then to something resembling rivals again, as Clinton defined herself anew and distanced herself from her old boss. In the process, it counters the narrative that, during her years as secretary of state, there was no daylight between them, that the wounds of the 2008 campaign had been entirely healed.

The president and his chief diplomat parted company over some of the biggest issues of the day: how quickly to wind down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; whether to arm the rebels in Syria; how to respond to the upheaval in Egypt; and whether to trust the Russians. In Landler’s gripping account, we venture inside the Situation Room during the raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound, watch Obama and Clinton work in tandem to salvage a conference on climate change in Copenhagen, and uncover the secret history of their nuclear diplomacy with Iran—a story with a host of fresh disclosures.

With the grand sweep of history and the pointillist detail of an account based on insider access—the book draws on exclusive interviews with more than one hundred senior administration officials, foreign diplomats, and friends of Obama and Clinton—Mark Landler offers the definitive account of a complex, profoundly important relationship. As Barack Obama prepares to relinquish the presidency, and Hillary Clinton makes perhaps her last bid for it, how both regard American power is a central question of our time.

Advance praise for *Alter Egos*

“A superb journalist has brought us a vivid, page-turning, and revelatory account of the relationship between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, as well as of their statecraft. *Alter Egos* will make a signal contribution to the national debate over who should be the next American president.”—Michael Beschloss, bestselling

author of *Presidential Courage*

“Mark Landler, one of the best reporters working in Washington today, delivers an inside account of Hillary Clinton’s relationship with Barack Obama that brims with insight and high-level intrigue. It’s both fun to read and eye-opening.”—**Jane Mayer, bestselling author of *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right***

Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power Details

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From Reader Review Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power for online ebook

Jake Goodman says

One of the best books Joe Federici has ever written.

Daniel Simmons says

An artfully written and very timely survey of the foreign policy instincts of two former-rivals-turned-allies-turned-wary-partners. Landler is respectful to both Obama and Clinton but even-handed in his treatment of their successes and their blunders. Time will tell if Obama's "Don't do stupid shit" pseudo-doctrine leads to a safer or more imperiled America. Time will also tell, much sooner, how Clinton will either take up that legacy or reject it in favor of her own more muscular approach to diplomacy and military adventures. For readers in search of an overview of US foreign policy and its main actors in Pakistan, China, Iran, Cuba, Myanmar, etc., this book is a terrific primer.

Dave Hoff says

No doubt Hillary knows her way around many countries of the world, for better, or more often for worse. Obama doesn't have a clue in global negotiations. Re: his red line with Syria, etc. Most scary is Hillary's closeness with Sid Blumenthal which resulted in a tragic mess in Libya and death of 4 men. Book ends with bad stuff happenings with Cuba and US relations.

Ali M. says

I personally think the author was far more sympathetic to Clinton than Obama,. The book also focuses more on her. Nonetheless, it was a fascinating 'trip down memory lane' of the past 8 years and providing some context for different major events.

The book does focus more on the relationship between different members of the administrations and aids than going into depth on the issues. I thought it would have been nice to go into the details of each of the events in a little more detail and show some of the nuances involved.

John Daly says

Book 15 of 40 for 2016

I read a review except of Mark Landler's Alter Egos in the Times the week it was published and downloaded on the iPad because I wanted to learn more about how American foreign policy has been crafted over the

past eight years.

I really wanted to learn more about what I consider the greater foreign policy blunder of this administration the failure to follow through on attacking Syria for the use of chemical weapons. Landler does an excellent job in his chapter dedicated the Syrian crisis of explaining how the Obama Administration created a blow to America's credibility to other nations and help excel the rise of Isis.

Lander does a good job of explains the differences in how Clinton and Obama approach foreign policy based on their background and generation. It is clear that Clinton is more of a hawk then Obama and unlike other Secretaries of State Clinton had a strong relationship with the Secretary of Defense Gates.

There is an interesting chapter on Cuba explain how US policy towards the island nation was beginning to single us out in the Organization of American States. I have always maintained that US Cuba policy is outdated and flawed based on what we learned with the fall of the Soviet Union. It is good to see that after 50 years of bad policy we are changing the course of this small island nation.

It's defiantly a good read if you looking to learn more about the Obama years.

Amy says

In the last few months, it has become especially important to me that I not be a voter who is selecting a candidate based solely on how much I dislike the opposition. This book was recommended to me as a good way to learn more about Hillary Clinton - both who she has been and who she is likely to be if elected President. I am not typically a non-fiction fan, especially in the category of politics, but this book was excellent. Landler does a great job of telling stories and describing events while adding relevant context, personality, and insight. The narrative is rich and detailed, but you don't have to know who absolutely everyone is in order to understand the complexities and significance. I thought I had some idea how complicated leadership at that level is, but I had no idea how many moving parts, competing agendas, short- and long-term goals, and political ripples one person has to juggle. I feel like a much smarter voter now, and I think Alter Egos will make even more!

Brandon Forsyth says

This book feels like a preview for a pretty good movie that you'll never get to see: JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA 7: FUCK YEAH is playing on all the megaplex screens, you're scared to use your Netflix account in case of monitoring and/or hacking, and you can't afford to buy a physical copy because despite (or, just possibly, the reverse) electing a leader with no clear economic agenda other than "trade is bad", you still don't have a well-paying job for some reason. Too bad. It looked kinda decent.

This is a well-researched (albeit slightly repetitive) examination of the differences between Hillary and her old boss, but really, it all feels a little pointless now.

David Brown says

Setting up a difference in approach based on history, personality and position (with lots of anecdotes about

tension between the surrounding casts of both principals - there is a chapter devoted to how the Obama team effectively mishandle the late richard holbrooke) this journalistic account of the Obama years covers a lot of ground, adding the odd impressive detail along the way. Once Mrs Clinton leaves office - although the book wisely adopts a thematic approach rather than a more straightforward chronology - it loses some of its potency, as she shifts from loyal lieutenant to aspiring and ambitious presidential candidate (he decides on Iran for example to maintain the analysis even though one of his two central characters has departed the main stage). Some very interesting analysis on Libya and on the weakness of Obama as an all too predictable president. The last chapter on Burma and Cuba is less useful and the conclusion goes nowhere but an easy and enjoyable read nonetheless

Erin says

This is a book that should be read by anyone planning to vote in the upcoming presidential election. "Alter Egos" provides an insider's view to foreign policy decisions made during the Obama presidency, coupled with a picture of the differences between President Obama and presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton. The book reads like a novel, but it fascinates because it portrays modern history. The author's description of the backgrounds of both Obama and Hillary Clinton provides a clear understanding as to why particular foreign policy decisions were made during this administration. It also provides insight into what the country can expect during a Clinton presidency. The book is fair and objective, and it brings the reader into the inner circle of Obama's cabinet. I came away with a better understanding as to where the country stands with regard to foreign policy, as well as inspired to read and learn more about this subject matter. The objectivity and insight provided by the author was refreshing.

Patrice Van Trigt says

Dit jaar is het zover. De tweede regeringstermijn en het achtste jaar van Obama zitten erop en dus gaat er een wisseling van de wacht plaatsvinden. Alle ogen van de wereld zijn gericht op de race voor de twee uiteindelijke presidentskandidaten. Al een tijd worden we overspoeld door populistische tv-spots van de Republikeinse vastgoedmagnaat Donald Trump met anti-islamitische uitspraken die zoveel aandacht

vragen/krijgen dat je haast zou vergeten waar het werkelijk om draait. Zoals het er nu naar uitziet maakt Democraat Hillary Clinton grote kans om de eerste vrouwelijke president van de VS te worden, nadat partijgenoot Obama de eerste gekleurde president werd. Wat heeft 'idealist' Obama de afgelopen acht jaar weten te bereiken en wat zijn de plannen van 'liberaal' Clinton? Gaat het haar lukken om geschiedenis te schrijven en om als voormalig first lady nu zelf president te worden van het machtigste land ter wereld?

Michael Landler volgde de afgelopen jaren de club van Obama en daarmee ook Hillary Clinton. Hij deed opmerkelijke kennis op die hij nu in dit boek met de wereld deelt. Kennis die niet zomaar op een willekeurig moment wordt gedeeld. Het is van essentieel belang om nu de balans op te maken voor de Amerikanen. Terwijl op dit moment de eindstrijd is losgebarsten tussen Trump en Clinton geeft dit boek een mooie gelegenheid om rustig de zaken eens op een rijtje te zetten, wat de Democraten en hun visie op de (wereld)politiek betreft. Het zal je in ieder geval veel meer informatie geven dan wat je op tv te zien krijgt en je toch wel wat wijzer maken over alles wat met het Witte Huis te maken heeft. Wat laat Obama achter en waarmee gaat Clinton aan de slag?

Ze zijn het vaker eens dan oneens maar het lijkt voor de buitenstaanders precies andersom. Uitlatingen in de pers in het verleden hebben weleens doen vermoeden dat Clinton en Obama water en vuur zijn. Maar na het lezen van dit meer dan interessante boek blijkt dat, gedeeltelijk, toch net wat anders te liggen. Althans, volgens Landler dan. Wat meteen al opvalt bij het lezen van dit boek is dat het is geschreven vanuit zijn interpretatie. Het is zijn perceptie en die van degenen die hij heeft gesproken in een wereld die wij totaal niet kennen en naar alle waarschijnlijkheid ook nooit zullen leren kennen. Obama en Clinton krijg je niet rechtstreeks ‘zelf’ te horen want ze hebben niet aan dit boek willen meewerken. Wat je wel te lezen krijgt is fascinerend enizar tegelijkertijd. Je kunt je wel een beetje een voorstelling maken van hoe en wat maar dit? Nee, “Alter ego’s” is zoveel meer dan een kijkje achter de schermen. Het geeft een weidse indruk over het leven van het hoofd van een wereldnatie maar ook de huidige strijd om ‘de kroon’ komt breed aan bod. En dan niet alleen per se tussen Democraten en Republikeinen, nee ook onderling is er sprake van honger naar macht en erkenning. Toch heeft Landler zich niet alleen hierop gefocust. De wereldpolitiek is zoveel meer dan het voeren van wel/geen oorlog of het onwijs groot aantal mensen, en dito meningen, waarmee men aan de top te maken heeft. Het is niet alleen Obama of alleen Clinton die het voor zeggen heeft/gaat hebben. Nee, het zijn middelgrote, politiek bedrijvende, ‘ondernemingen’ die alleen maar het leven kunnen zien dankzij de gratie én financiële middelen van derden. Iedereen lijkt er belang bij te hebben en dus ook zij willen een stukje van de cake. Politiek bedrijven is een teamding, geen individuele aangelegenheid.

Het meest interessante stuk, en dat is ook meteen het grootste paradespaardje van dit boek en de Amerikaanse politiek, is het buitenlands beleid. Dit is meer complex dan gedacht. Het is niet alleen een kwestie van overleggen welke oliestaat gebukt gaat onder een tiran en dan een bom erop om de oliewinst te waarborgen. Nee, het is een ingewikkeld materie die op sympathie maar ook steeds meer weerstand stuit. Zowel in de VS als daarbuiten. De terreurdreiging is een grote factor die voor veel discussie zorgt en ligt erg gevoelig. Sinds de aanslagen op 9/11 is de VS in constante staat van paraatheid. De onderlinge meningsverschillen hoe dit aan te pakken zijn groot. Obama is meer gematigd dan Clinton. Zij is heilig voorstander van gecalculeerd ingrijpen en het laten zien van spierballen. Hij is behoudender, naar binnen gericht en radicaal in het aanvaarden van beperkingen. Zij is strijdbaarder, pragmatisch en brutaal op een ouderwetse manier. Niet gek dan ook dat ze het geregeld niet met elkaar eens zijn en de schijn naar buiten ophouden als het op hun verstandhouding aankomt. Niets is zo complex als het waarborgen van (schijn)veiligheid, zo blijkt. Geen enkele dag is hetzelfde.

Kijkend naar de mens Obama en Clinton kom je tot de conclusie dat de twee ook veel gemeen hebben, ze zijn van oorsprong beiden jurist, de liefde voor hun land staat op de eerste plaats zonder blind te zijn voor hetgeen zich afspeelt over de grenzen. Ze kennen de valkuilen van de politiek en hebben het plichtbesef dat hun gezamenlijke verantwoordelijkheid voor hun land prioriteit heeft boven hun rivaliteit. Een goed voorbeeld daarvan is de klimaattop 2009 in Denemarken. Het is niet zozeer de inhoud waar ze het over oneens zijn maar meer over de manier waarop ze de zaken moeten benaderen en aanpakken. Een zeer interessante wisselwerking tussen de huidige president en zijn minister van buitenlandse zaken. Dat was erg fascinerend om te lezen. Verbazingwekkend was het mailcontact over een vergadering waarin Clinton min of meer smeekte te mogen weten of die inderdaad plaatsvond en of zij dan mocht gaan.....bizar.

“Zij is een stoere strijder, hij een voorzichtig diplomaat.”

Wat voor ons als Europeanen interessant is om te lezen is vooral hoe dat logge instituut ongeveer werkt en hun beleid t.a.v. het buitenland, o.a. ons dus. Ze hebben te maken met een wereld die niet altijd meewerkt. En precies die wereld zorgt voor vele vragen, hoe gaat een volgende president zich onderscheiden en standhouden? Is Clinton die persoon? Zal zij, bij opvolging, het beleid ten opzichte van o.a. China, Poetin en Assad handhaven? Het is tenslotte geen geheim wat Clinton daarover denkt.

Landler heeft het beschreven en gebaseerd op al die jaren dat hij in deze kringen heeft gewerkt. Je mag dus aannemen dat het grotendeels klopt, het zal zijn waarheid zijn. Wat jammer is dat geen van beide hoofdpersonages medewerking heeft verleend, dat zou het boek een meer authentiek elan hebben gegeven. De uitspraken van sommige mensen deden echt wel verbazen, maar dat is ook wel weer leuk. Het deed niet aan als roddel en achterklap, het is voor de lezer toch niet te onderscheiden wat nu wel of niet echt gezegd is. Wat wel opviel tijdens het lezen was dat Landler een prodemocratische indruk achterlaat, wat prima is maar wel opmerkelijk vanuit journalistiek oogpunt bekeken, die zou ongekleurd moeten zijn.

Het boek gaat over politiek. Het is dan ook in die sfeer geschreven en dat is soms best even bikkelen. Het is prettig een beeld te hebben over hoe de Amerikaanse politiek in elkaar steekt en wat de rangordes zijn. Je wordt om de oren geslagen met veel namen (de meeste moet je googelen om te kunnen plaatsen), enorm veel voorbeelden van gesprekken (weer met de bijbehorende namen), data van gebeurtenissen (sommigen zijn bekend van het nieuws en andere zeggen je waarschijnlijk niets) én ontzettend veel zaken die echt alleen interessant zijn voor de Amerikanen zelf. Neemt niet weg dat het boek meer dan fascinerend is en ontzettend veel meer laat weten dan andere boeken over dit onderwerp tot nu toe. Het is goed in elkaar gezet, duidelijke verdelingen qua gebeurtenissen (en die zijn er veel!) en bijzonder aangenaam geschreven. Soms is het wat vermoedend om te lezen want het is erg veel allemaal en het volgt elkaar supersnel op. Het is dus wel goed opletten! Toch is ‘Alter ego’s ‘een absolute aanrader voor iedereen die geïnteresseerd is in politiek, de verkiezingen, de Verenigde Staten en/of Obama en Clinton. Het is een flinke pil met leerzame geschiedenis en wellicht ook een voorbereidend stuk over de geschiedenis die binnenkort geschreven gaan worden. We wachten het af, maar nu met meer kennis over de gang van zaken. Het boek is de moeite echt meer dan waard.

4 sterren

Ian says

A lot of the initial chatter I heard about this book centered on its supposed portrayal of a cynical competition between Obama and Clinton to claim credit for the most important policy achievements of his first term. ... Kind of, but not really. Instead, this book is really a chronicle of Obama's unique, post-Cold War vision of foreign policy and how his disagreements with Clinton's more old school instincts played out.

The most illuminating aspect for me was to realize how deliberately and consistently Obama pursued his ideals. He wasn't merely reacting against the excesses of the Bush administration; he was trying to profoundly transform America's strategic vision, toward engagement and multilateralism. And while his relative failures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and (partly) Russia are what's drawn the most attention, he enjoyed immense success from Iran to Cuba, from climate change to strategic (i.e., military) commitment to Southeast Asia. Highly recommended to anyone who wants to understand the foreign policy debates of our time.

Ryan Splenda says

The relationship between President Obama and Secretary Clinton has always been of interest to me...especially given their brutal 2008 Democratic campaign. In many ways they are polar opposites of each other, and national security/foreign relations is one of those areas. Landler provides important insights into

many events that they both encountered from 2009-2012 including Egypt, Libya, Cuba, Iran, China and more, and how they differed on them and handled them in the end. Although he remains objective throughout most of this book, I was a bit disappointed that Landler let his leanings slip out multiple times in the favor of Secretary Clinton. Nevertheless, an important read for historical purposes.

Adrian says

A great book by New York Times White House correspondent Mark Landler that chronicled US foreign policy during the last 7 years. It's a great read for someone who want to quickly 'get up to speed' about the US relationship with Egypt, Isreal, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, and Burma.

This book was well written, well researched, and a joy to read. Landler gave a first-hand account of the dynamics between President Obama and his small inner circle and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her legion of advisers. While he generally depicted both leaders in a positive light, he didn't hold back in identifying their blunders.

I picked this book up the same day it was released and there's something refreshing about it being current.

Two points I took from this book:

- 1.) The country benefited a great deal by electing President Obama twice. His principle centered leadership style is a model for all presidents that follow.
- 2.) Hillary Clinton is more than capable of leading this country and building upon his legacy.

Jean says

This book is an informative study of the relationship between Obama and Hillary Clinton. Mark Landler is the White House correspondent for the New York Times. His main question is: Would Hillary actually preside over a more robustly interventionist foreign policy than Obama? Or, is she simply adopting a hawkish viewpoint to swing voters?

Landler states there is no doubt tension exists between the two. There is a profound clash over foreign policy visions between them. When she was Secretary of State her requested aids were refused and she could never penetrate the Obama inner circle. Landler goes beyond the tracing of events to prove his thesis. In his view, Obama and Hillary "are more than just two of the most riveting political figures of our time. They are protagonists in a great debate over American power—one that will decide the direction the nation will take against the forces of disorder". To me I do not think the difference is enormous between the two except Hillary maybe more of a pragmatist.

The book is well written and researched. Landler conducted many interviews as well as the usual basic data research. As a journalist he attempts to be neutral and just report his findings. The book does bring the reader into the inner circle of the Obama presidency.

Jason Culp does a good job narrating the book. Culp is a well known film and TV actor as well as a voice over artist and narrator of audiobooks.

Steven Z. says

Following his victory in the 2008 presidential election Barack Obama chose Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State. Many pundits conjectured as to why Obama made this selection. They argued that he was following the path of Abraham Lincoln by placing his opponents in his cabinet so he could keep an eye on them and control any opposition. This view is wonderfully presented in Doris Kearns Goodwin's *TEAM OF RIVALS: THE POLITICAL GENIUS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN*, but one must ask could Goodwin's thesis actually represent Obama's motivation. In his new book, *ALTER EGOS: HILLARY CLINTON, BARACK OBAMA, AND THE TWILIGHT STRUGGLE OVER AMERICAN POWER* Mark Landler, a New York Times reporter compares Obama and Clinton's approach to the conduct of foreign policy and how it has affected America's position in the world. In doing so Landler explores in detail their relationship on a personal, political, and ideological level. Landler delves into the differences in their backgrounds that reflect how they came to be such powerful figures and why they pursue the realpolitik that each believes in. In so doing we learn a great deal about each person and can speculate on why Obama chose what really can only be characterized as his political enemy throughout the 2008 campaign trail as his Secretary of State. What is even more interesting is their differences that can be summed up very succinctly; for Obama the key to conducting a successful foreign policy was "Don't do stupid shit," for Clinton, "great nations need organizing principles...don't do stupid stuff is not an organizing principle."

Since we are in the midst of a presidential election and it appears that Hillary Clinton will be the Democratic nominee it is important to evaluate and understand her approach to foreign relations. Landler does the American electorate a service as his book is a useful handbook in understanding and getting an idea how she would approach the major foreign policy issues that America currently faces should she assume the oval office. By comparing her with Obama we gain important insights into her thinking and how she would implement her ideas. It is clear during Obama's first term that Clinton was the "house hawk" within his administration as she supported increases in troop deployments to Afghanistan which Obama reluctantly agreed to, but only with a set time limit; she wanted to leave a large residual force in Iraq after American withdrawal which Obama did not do; she favored funneling weapons to rebels in Syria fighting Assad as well as the creation of a no fly zone which Obama opposed; and lastly, she favored the overthrow of Muammar al-Qaddafi and the bombing of Libya when he threatened to destroy Benghazi which Obama reluctantly agreed to. Their differences are clear, Obama believes that the United States is too willing to commit to military force and intervene in foreign countries, a strategy that has been a failure and has led to a decline in America's reputation worldwide, a reputation he promised to improve and has been partly successful with the opening to Cuba and the nuclear deal with Iran. For Clinton the calculated employment of American military power is important in defending our national interests, and that our intervention does more good than harm, especially in exporting development programs and focusing on human rights. Obama arrived on the scene as a counterrevolutionary bent on ending Bush's wars and restoring America's moral standing. He no longer accepted the idea that the U.S. was the world's undisputed "hegemon" and shunned the language of American exceptionalism. Clinton has a much more conventional and political approach, "she is at heart a 'situationist,' somebody who reacts to problems piecemeal rather than fitting them into a larger doctrine." Her view is grounded in cold calculation with a textbook view of American exceptionalism.

Landler describes the difficulties that Clinton had adapting to the Obama White House that is very centralized in decision-making and she had difficulty penetrating Obama's clannish inner circle. The author

also does an excellent job explaining the main players in Hillaryland and the Obama world that include Obama's whiz kids, Denis McDonough and Ben Rhodes, and Clinton's staffers Jake Sullivan and Huma Abedin. Since Obama was a self-confident president who had a tight grip on foreign policy, Clinton spent most of her time implementing the strategy set by the White House. During the first two years of the Obama administration Clinton pursued a global rehabilitation tour to patch up the mess that Bush left. During her second two years she did more of the heavy lifting on sensitive issues like Syria, Libya, Iran, China, and Israel which Landler dissects in detail. From her UN women's conference address in Beijing during her husband's administration, her lackluster attempts at bringing peace between the Palestinians and Israel, developing and implementing sanctions against Iran, her support for the rebels in Syria, and the overthrow of Qaddafi, we get unique insights into Clinton's approach to foreign policy.

The fundamental difference or fault line between Obama and Clinton was Clinton's vote in favor of the invasion of Iraq on October 2, 2002, a vote that Obama opposed as a state senator in Illinois. Landler does a marvelous job comparing their backgrounds and the influence of their personal experience on their worldview. Obama's divided heritage of Hawaii, Kenya, and especially Indonesia defined him from the outset. For him Indonesia highlighted the ills of the oil companies, western development programs, and American power as it supported repressive military dictatorships to further its Cold War agenda. Obama was an anti-colonialist and could put himself in the place of third world cultures in his decision-making. Clinton on the other hand was rooted in Midwestern conservatism and her interests after law school was to try and alleviate poverty and defend the legal rights of children. Landler is correct when he states that "Clinton viewed her country from the inside out; Obama from the outside in."

Landler presents a number of important chapters that provide numerous insights into the Obama-Clinton relationship. Particularly important is the chapter that focuses on Richard Holbrooke, a career diplomat that dated back to Vietnam and ended with his death in 2010. A swash buckling man who did not fit into the Obama mold was brilliant, self-promoting and usually very effective, i.e., the Dayton Accords in 1995 that ended the fighting in Bosnia. He hoped as Clinton's special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan to help mediate and bring some sort of closure to the conflict with the Taliban. Holbrooke rubbed Obama the wrong way and was seen as the epitome of everything Obama rejected in a diplomat and Clinton who had a very strong relationship with Holbrooke going back many years spent a great deal of time putting out fires that he caused. Another important chapter focuses on administration attempts to mediate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For Clinton it was a no win situation for a person who represented New York in the Senate and planned to seek the presidency on her own. Obama would force her to become engaged in the process along with special envoy, George Mitchell, and she spent a great deal of time trying to control the animosity between Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Landler's discussion of the Obama-Netanyahu relationship is dead on as the Israeli Prime Minister and his right wing Likud supporters represented the colonialism that Obama despised. For Netanyahu, his disdain for the president was equal in kind. In dealing with the Middle East and the Arab Spring Clinton argued against abandoning Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak as she believed in the stability and loyalty to allies, Obama wanted to be "on the right side of history," and in hindsight he was proven to be totally wrong. These views are polar opposites and helps explain Obama and Clinton's frustration with each other that form a major theme of Landler's narrative.

Obama's drone policy was another source of disagreement between the President and Secretary of State. For Obama "targeted killings" was a better strategy than the commitment of massive numbers of American troops. The primacy of employing drones is the key to understanding Obama's foreign policy. For Clinton regional stability, engagement, and the United States military is the key to a successful foreign policy. As Vasil Nasr states, Obama believes that "we don't need to invest in the Arab Spring. We don't need to worry about any of this; all we need to do is to kill terrorists. It's a different philosophy of foreign policy. It's

surgical, it's clinical, and it's clean."

Perhaps Landler's best chapter deals with the evolution of Syrian policy. Internally Clinton favored aid to the Syrian rebels which Obama opposed during the summer of 2012. However, when Obama decided to walk back his position on the "Red Line" that if crossed by Assad through the use of chemical weapons, the US would respond with missile attacks. Once this policy changed to seeking Congressional approval for any missile attack, the United States gave up any hope in shaping the battlefield in Syria which would be seized by others eventually leading to ISIS. Obama needed Clinton's support for this change. Though privately Clinton opposed the move, publicly at her own political risk she supported the president. This raises the question; how much difference was there in their approach to foreign policy? It would appear that though there were differences, Clinton was a good team player, even out of office, though as the 2016 presidential campaign has evolved she has put some daylight between her and the president. From Obama's perspective, though he disagreed with his Secretary of State on a number of occasions he did succumb to her position on a series of issues, particularly Libya, which he came to regret. The bottom line is clear, Clinton kept casting around for solutions for the Syrian Civil War, however unrealistic. Obama believed that there were no solutions – at least none that could be imposed by the U.S. military. Another example of how the two worked together was in dealing with Iran's nuclear program. They both agreed on the approach to be taken, a two track policy of pressure and engagement. Clinton played the bad cop enlisting a coalition of countries to impose punishing sanctions while the President sent letters to the Supreme Leader and taped greetings to the Iranian people on the Persian New Year as the good cop! But, once again they appeared to be working in lock step together.

The question proposed at the outset of this review was whether President Obama chose Hillary Clinton so he could keep her within the "tent" as Abraham Lincoln did. After reading ALTER EGOS there is no concrete conclusion that one can arrive at. Even at the end of Clinton's term as Secretary of State two major diplomatic moves were made; the groundwork that would lead to a restoration of relations with Havana and an opening with Burma took place. In both cases the President and Clinton were on the same page, therefore one must conclude that though there were some bumps in the road, publicly, Obama and Clinton pursued a similar agenda and were mostly in agreement. As a result, it would appear that they are more similar than different and that the "team of rivals" concept may not fit. It seems the title ALTER EGOS could give way, perhaps to THE ODD COUPLE, a description that might be more appropriate.
