

# Foreign policy takes stage, yet most voters indifferent, professor says

October 1 2012, by Courtney Culey

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(Phys.org)—Foreign policy has taken center stage in the presidential campaign as Barack Obama and Mitt Romney tout their differing plans – and take aim at one another's vision for international security.

Unfortunately, voters pay little attention to these issues when electing a president, said Matt Zierler, associate professor of international relations at Michigan State University's James Madison College.

"Foreign policy does matter, but voters traditionally don't pay much attention to it," Zierler said.

There's a lot of tension in the world, Zierler noted. The European financial crisis appears to be getting worse. The Middle East is in chaos. There is violence in Libya and Egypt and United States Embassies are under attack. And Iran is working to gain nuclear power.

But Obama, the Democratic incumbent, and Republican challenger Romney have disparate views on many of these foreign policy and global issues should be handled.

"In reality, they might have similar goals, but it's all about how they want to get there," Zierler said.

Obama prefers a more diplomatic approach, Zierler said. Obama aims to work with U.S. allies but not cater to their needs. He is committed to

ending the [war in Afghanistan](#) and bringing U.S. troops back, and hopes to cut U.S. defense spending.

Romney takes a much more hardline approach to foreign policy, Zierler said. He wants to be tougher on Russia and China. He wants to take aggressive actions to prevent countries from gaining nuclear power. Romney likely will increase defense spending and wants to be more aggressive when supporting U.S. allies, Zierler said.

According to recent public opinion polls, Zierler said Americans tend to favor a [foreign policy](#) approach more similar to Obama's.

Provided by Michigan State University

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