

SIFA Special Lecture on
“The U.S. Foreign Policy and 2008 Presidential Election”

By

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Thank you, sir, for your kind introduction. It’s a great privilege to be as a speaker here at the Saranrom Institute of Foreign Affairs. Thailand has for many years been known for its first-class diplomats and I know that Saranrom’s activities since 2003 are helping to strengthen that reputation. Let me be one of the first to offer my congratulations on the upcoming 5th anniversary. It is also a personal pleasure to be back here in Thailand.

Like many American children in the 1960s, I first heard about Thailand from my father, who had served twice as a pilot in Vietnam. He knew your country as a refuge from war, both on holiday and more than once in diverting his fighter-plane to the base at Ubon. He told me of your country’s beauty, a story which inspired me to come here as a young man in 1988. I spent a month travelling all round the country, including Koh Samui, and up to Chiangmai and the Cambodian border. On that trip, I came to share the affection of many Americans for your country.

In returning many times since, I have witnessed Thailand’s extraordinary political and economic change. We’re happy that that change is continuing this weekend. America has also watched with great admiration and appreciation as Thailand puts its sons and daughters into harm’s way to help others, from sending troops to East Timor, Afghanistan, and now to Darfur, to sending aid to Bangladesh after the recent floods.

I have been asked today to address political change in my own country, specifically our upcoming 2008 Presidential Elections and their effect on foreign policy. I will immediately admit to you that I have two biases. I am indeed a Republican and, while my Institute which supports those working for freedom in

other countries is not formally affiliated with the Republican Party, we have an all-Republican Board. My second bias that I will admit to you is my great affection for John McCain, who as many of you know is a very good friend of Thailand. I have known him and worked for him intermittently for many years.

Having said all this, I'll do my best to keep my prejudices under control. You did not come here today to listen to a Republican campaign speech. If you are looking at our presidential race, you know that many Americans are being subjected to campaign speeches. In January and early February, there will be an intense and rather quick barrage of caucuses and primaries. The desire by many American states to have more influence in choosing major parties' candidates has led to front-loaded and compressed schedules of caucuses and primaries. And the nominee of both parties should be evident no later than mid February, about a month after the balloting begins.

Most analysts still expect Hillary Clinton after summer losses, such as in Iowa, to prevail over Barack Obama as the Democrat candidate. She has a formidable campaign machine based on her own political experience and contacts and those of her husband. But anyone who thinks her candidacy is simply the result of her husband's presidency does not know Hillary Clinton, for she is a disciplined, canny, and extremely bright person, as she has proven as Senator from New York.

I have had occasion to spend time with her main opponent, Senator Barack Obama. He is a very charismatic, inspiring, and intelligent man. And some of us are old enough to remember the Kennedys. He reminds many of us of the Kennedys in his attributes. In my opinion, as I've told some, he will be president one day, but not in 2008.

I'm gonna disappoint you by not predicting Hillary Clinton's Republican opponent, even with my bias for Senator McCain at this point or the Republican race is too fluid to guess the winner with any confidence. The top candidates here are former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, Arizona Senator John McCain, and Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

I will not go through their campaigns' attributes and weaknesses. In current polling regarding a general campaign, only McCain and Giuliani come close to hitting Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. For political fans like me, or even for foreign observers of American politics, the caucuses and primaries, and twists and turns, of American internal politics are all very interesting. But for most of the world, the real question is: Who will prevail next November and what foreign policy will they pursue? Republican and Democrats are today emphasizing the differences between the two parties on particular issues such as how to persecute the war in Iraq. Those contrasts will be the focus of the campaigns.

But I will not talk about these today for a couple of reasons. First, you will be quickly very tired of hearing about them in the coming months and I don't want to add to that. Second, what's more important to my own belief about politics ending up at the water's edge is that in predicting the foreign policies of the next administration, it's important not just to focus on the differences. It is also at least as valuable to talk about domestic currents that will shape the contours of our foreign policies regardless of who wins in 2008. And that is what I want to address this morning.

Perhaps the most important place to begin with is to understand that while the Americans today still see themselves as living in the post-9/11 world, they are taking into account the meaning of living in a post-Iraq world. In other words, six years after 9/11, parts of the Bush' s administration's response to that terrible day have themselves produced the reaction, not just overseas but also in America. There is surprisingly broad consensus in America about changes that need to be made in our foreign policy. So, what is that consensus? Based on past experiences, students of American history might predict that Americans become more isolationist.

Over the last centuries, Americans have had a habit of retreating into ourselves after major wars: World War I and a period of isolation that only ended with World War II. And in the years immediately after World War II, we retreated briefly only to be drawn back to our responsibility by President Truman and Secretary of State, John Marshall, and finally the Korean War.

As Thailand knows, we retreated again briefly after Vietnam, a period that ended with Ronald Reagan's election. And I think it's generally recognized that at the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, and particularly Somalia, we retreated again, a period that really only ended with September 11, 2001. I do not think that will happen again under the next President. This time, at the moment, about half of the American people agree with the statement that the US should be less actively involved abroad and should focus more on issues here at home. But the other half says that America should be more involved as we are a leader and global issues affect us here at home.

All through this speech, in the report and poll done jointly by the Republican and Democratic Parties, eighty percent of Americans want to see a president "committed to keep America strong and secure around the world." Only nineteen percent want to significantly limit America's role in the world. Nineteen percent may sound a lot, but in America, it is not that high, considering what we have been through. Having said that the Americans view themselves as living in a post-Iraq world, 9/11 continues to have a very firm imprint on America's consciousness for many reasons. The most important for our purposes today is that the American mainland has not been attacked in almost a hundred and ninety years.

I think Americans understand that even with their frustration and disillusion over the Iraq War, we can no longer retreat behind the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, and that doing so gives us less ability to stop the kind of attacks we saw on 9/11. In a sense, the parameters of debate on foreign policy were moved by 9/11 and isolation at least is no longer viewed as a viable foreign policy option. The reaction to the Iraq War has once again narrowed those parameters. What Americans now want to do, they say, is to pull away from the option of isolationism, to pull away from what they perceive as a going alone approach in foreign policy.

Terrorism continues to be the top foreign policy concern cited by Americans. Almost eighty percent of Americans believe that we are less respected by other countries. And three quarters of those say that this is a major problem. From the center right to the left, improving America's relationship with other countries is rated among the top three foreign policy issues. Two third of Americans say that improving

American image around the world is important to them in determining which candidate to support. And eighty-one percent say that America cannot face the world's problems alone, that we need to work closely with other countries around the world to share the burden.

What has been changed, as I think you will see no matter who is elected, is the emphasis placed on the issues in addition to terrorism and Iraq. The next administration, Republican or Democrat, will have to deal with the consonances that have recently arisen among Americans over the last few years on issues like environmental issues and global warming, now rated among the top five foreign policy issues by voters. This is reinforced by public consensus among voters that our dependence on foreign oil must be reduced. And indeed in looking at all these issues, working better with other countries on environmental issues and oil, if you look at the speeches and articles of the major candidates, one finds Clinton, Obama, Giuliani, McCain, and Thompson emphasizing working well with other nations.

By the way, if you get a chance, if you are interested in the major candidates, the campaigns on foreign relations have asked them to do an article each that has been in the Foreign Affairs magazine. One of the candidates has even gone so far as to accuse Bush's administration of having a bunker mentality in dealing with foreigners. And that's the Republican Mike Huckabee. All candidates are talking about reducing our dependency on foreign oil. And while not all of the Republicans agree that we should sign the Kyoto Protocol, almost all believe and now say that global warming is a real issue that needs to be addressed.

What one does not find, except for the fifth or sixth ranking candidates in each Party such as, people you might never heard of, Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich, what you do not find except among them is talk of bringing America home, to borrow a phrase from a gentleman named George McGovern, who ran for president in 1972. Even a well-known candidate espousing less international economic engagement, former vice-presidential candidate John Edwards, is seeing little attraction beyond Iowa, where he is currently second or third amongst democrats.

My final and in this case personal prediction, not based on any polling, is that whereas the U.S. has been extremely focused on Iraq and the Middle East for much of the last six years, the improvements in Iraq and the American desire not to remain there for the long term will enable our attention to once again move more broadly to other parts of the world. In the last month, I heard your former Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan and also President Saca of El Salvador, who visited us in particular, complain about the lack of the American attention to their regions. I think you will find this changing no matter who wins the White House.

To run up, you will see over the next ten month, a great deal of emphasis on the differences between the candidates, including on foreign policy. These differences are important. But they will not represent a choice between extremists on their “go it alone” or an isolationist foreign policy. Instead, because of the effect of both 9/11 and the Iraq War, they will be in fact variations within a smaller part of the spectrum of foreign policy approaches. This policy will mean that America remains engaged and seeks partners in every region in trying to solve problems.

I’ve spent a lot of time telling my European friends that I hope they will respond to signs of engagement from the U.S. and I would urge the same of Thailand. As America begins reaching out more in this region, it will be important that proponents of engagement in Washington be encouraged and that we find common solutions to common problems. Americans, as you know, tend to give short speeches and take more questions, a tradition I will be very happy to follow at this time.

Thank you again for the invitation and for your attention today.

Q&A Session

Question 1: Dr. Eugene Jones from Mahidol University: This is not to be confrontational, but you have told us that there will be two parties. And then you said there is not much difference between them. Yet you claim that you support democracy. As an American socialist, I would like to ask you to justify that.

Answer 1: Sure. Just to be clear, I do think that there are big differences between the candidates including on foreign policy but my point is that no matter who is elected, the foreign policy will operate within certain parameters. What is described is that two-party system in America is very interesting. I'm always encouraging people overseas to get involved in politics. So, I hope you in the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and others get involved in American politics.

But America is unusual in having just two parties and having such a broad span of thought within each party, which I think is something you can see in the debates, when you have people all the way from Dennis Kucinich to Hillary Clinton and from Ron Paul to Mitt Romney within another Party. But I would certainly, you know we don't agree on much, I would encourage you to get involved and stay involved in American politics.

Question 2: Dr. Somkiati Ariyapruchya, Dean of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies at Rangsit University: I would like to ask you two questions. At global warming, would the Democrats be signing the Kyoto Protocol like Australia?

Answer 2: There are 2 things going on in America. If you asked the average American 2-4 years ago about global warming, half of them would have said, they didn't believe in it. Probably most of the other half would have said "We'll figure out the way to deal with it." Starting about 2 years ago, there started to be real consciousness. I would go to Europe and I would hear people talking about kilometers that food had gone to come to their country. Nobody in America had ever thought about this. I've heard about Australia. I think it was the first to ban tungsten light bulbs. Nobody in America a year or two ago had even thought of such a thing. And for a lot of reasons in the last two years, this has become a very big issue in the United States. There are some who say we should sign the Kyoto Treaty. There are others who say signing a treaty is not necessarily gonna end global warming on the day that it is signed. There are still some in America who say we can find scientific approaches to deal with this problem. But there is nobody in America anymore who says that this is not an issue. So, I think the Democrats have thought more about this issue, and have dealt with it.

But you know, the gentleman that I said I'm biased in favor of, John McCain, has been very forthright on this issue, and in typical fashion, he brings it up most though more people are gonna disagree with him. He and a couple of people have been forthright on this. But if the question is: Who is gonna be most aggressive about global warming? It's gonna be the Democrats.

Question 2 (continued): My view is that the signing of the Protocol would be a very good indication of the political will of any administration. Coming to the second question, you know every year we see the show about electoral colleges, caucuses, and all these primaries. I would like to ask you if there has been any thinking whether this kind of system should continue or should be improved vis-a-vis popular votes. This is because, if you look back into the history, there have been some people who win the electoral vote and some people who wins the popular vote. And of course, the political landscape of the world has changed because of that.

In a way, the electoral vote is really in favor of smaller states. Am I correct to say that people who live in a smaller state will have a little bit more vote than in the other ones? So, it doesn't really coincide with one man one vote. So, I would like to ask for your view about this.

Answer 2 (continued): It is a very odd system and frankly I don't think most Americans really understand that. After the 2000 Election, because there was another election where the popular votes and the electoral votes could have gone either way, there was some talk about getting rid of them. But I don't hear about that much talk about that any more. As you said, it was originally intended to help advance the interest of smaller states.

You see that also in our Senate system. In our House of Representatives, it is basically one representative for every five thousand voters. So, you have scores of representatives from California whereas a state like Wyoming, I think, just got its second representative. And the question early on in our republic was how we're gonna make sure that every state that we want to join this union has equal representation. The Senate is part of every state no matter how small, how popular.

I don't see that changing any time soon. And again, for a system that not many people understand, I don't see that changing anytime soon.

Question 3: Dr. Worvit Veeraworvit, the Deputy Secretary General of the National Office of Human Rights Commission: I would like to ask you whether it is possible for us to see a more consistent U.S. policy against the so-called "undemocratic government," against the abuses of human rights in the so-called "allies of the U.S." Or will the new U.S. government continue to be a hypocrite turning a blind eye when abuses are committed?

Answer 3: It's a very good question. I think everybody understood it. This is an issue I used to deal with personally because I was in the State Department as Collin Powell's top guy on human rights and democracy. The reason I got into this business was because, when I was young, my father was in Vietnam. I came to feel that the South Vietnamese Army felt that they had nothing to fight for, that we have given them nothing to fight for. It was partly for that reason that it was difficult to keep up their morale and capacity. When I was 21-22, I spent a summer in Taiwan, when there was no opposition party. It was a very closed political system.

After 9/11, I think we realized that we should be pushing our allies as much as pushing our enemies or adversaries on human rights. I don't think we have been perfect at that. I personally feel that we have treated some of our friends better than they should have been treated. I don't feel that we've treated our enemies worse than they should have been treated. I think we can always do a better job. But part of the issue to remember: the primary job of the U.S. Government is not to promote human rights and freedom of other countries. The primary job of the United States Government is to safeguard the United States. And occasionally these two goals come into conflicts and policy makers will say human rights and freedom is important in their countries and we need to work on that on the long term or the medium term. But in the short term, this person or this country is important to our national security interests. Right until the very end, you can see that in the Philippines, and in Chile with Pinochet.

But in the end, the U.S. does understand that we have to be on the side of human rights and democracy. So, for example, I would be the first to criticize our policy in Pakistan. I did critique the policy in Pakistan. Immediately after this, I will be going to Pakistan to lead the observation delegation of 65 observers from about 11 countries to be able to give judgement on the Pakistani election. We are being funded by the U.S. Government but we are going to be very honest not only about the election but all the events that lead to this election.

So, you are right. We are not always perfectly consistent, but I can tell you that, unlike many other countries, whether as friends or enemies, we do push this issue. It maybe number one on our agenda, or maybe number two or three. Having worked with many dissidents, they tend to look towards the U.S. for support on this issue more than any another country.

Question 4: Dr. Wiwat Moongkarndi, Chulalongkorn University: Thank you for your clear and concise presentation. I like your concluding remarks that America is not going alone. But, listening to many candidates' speeches, I think all candidates try to bring back America to pre-Bush Jr.'s administration. Of course, America is prepared to engage with the world. But, my question is: Is America ready for change? After 8 years of America's involvement in the Middle East, the world has changed tremendously in the case of rising power of China, India, Brazil, and South Africa. It is a new world and a "post-American world."

So, I'm just wondering if the U.S. is ready to help solve the problems of the world. Recently, Ron Paul, a Republican representative was raising a lot of funds, surpassing many other Republican candidates and he is advocating America-first policy. So, a sense of isolationism is still prevailing one way or another. So, I am not sure if the U.S. is ready to change in helping solving the problem of the world. That is what the world is looking for America to do. A noted political scientist in the U.S. has remarked that we now have the Kennedy's dictum in reverse. In other words, there is a saying: "Ask not what America will do for the world. Ask what the world will do for America." How would you react to that?

I am part of the Republican family. Every family has a crazy relative. And Ron Paul is the most intriguing of the Republican presidential candidates. It is true that he has some wealthy support. I mentioned that nineteen percent of Americans want to be isolationists, and, so, from the nineteen percent you can raise quite a bit of funding. But I will not take Ron Paul too seriously. The other Republican candidates don't, and I don't think you should either. Generally, over the year, the U.S. has two speeds of foreign policy: one is isolationism and the other is overbearing. It is not a U.S. skill to figure out how to operate in between those two extremes on foreign policy. I think that it is a fair assessment if you look back 50-60 years.

I think the style of foreign policy needs to be different. It is certainly the case that American people in general don't have great understanding of the world outside. I think the people in power can act with a little more grace in diplomacy. It's gonna be interesting to watch the United States deal not with the unipolar world, but really we only have that for the last 18 years where it has been unipolar, and the Americans had a lot of practice in our history in operating in a bipolar world.

As for China's rise, I'm in the minority of China watchers. If you expect a linear progression in terms of China's economic, political, and military power over the next 30 years, be careful. Look back 30 years at where China was at that time. I went to China for the first time in 1981, and it was a very, very different country. And I think it was a fair question to ask how the Communist Party, which is a very adaptable organism, is gonna be able to continue to meet the rising expectations of people in China, not only the rising material expectations, but the rising personal and political expectations. So far, they have done a pretty good job at that, but those expectations only get higher.

So, I think it is going to take some effort on the side of the U.S. to be able to think and deal not just in a bipolar and certainly not in a unipolar world, but also in a multi-polar world. And I would include Europe amongst that. I think there are some nations in Latin America that are becoming more and more important. The Communist Party is very adaptable but America is also pretty adaptable too.

Question 5: Mr. Netithorn Praditsarn, Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: You are quoting the numbers from the opinion polls that predict the U.S. to be non-isolationist. My question is what really drives the U.S. foreign policy? Do opinion polls matter? For example, about the war in Iraq, there has been opposition about the war in Iraq. But it seems they have done very little in affecting the change in foreign policy. So, in your view, although the opinion polls seem to point in one direction, is it really going to happen? What really drives the U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century in your view?

Answer 5: Those are two very good questions. First of all, if I'm leaving the impression that all these opinion polls are gonna drive policy makers, they are. What they are gonna do is reinforce policy makers in what policy makers believe. There has been rather, with a few exceptions like Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul, a pretty common reaction, especially among front runners, to some of the events of the last 6 years. There is general agreement on pursuing the war on terror. Anybody who thinks that with Bush's administration gone, the war on terror will go away is very much mistaken. I used to tell my European friend who loves John Kerry in 2004 that don't think when John Kerry gets in we are gonna join the international criminal court, or sign on to Kyoto and will be ignoring the terrorists. That will not happen.

There are front runners that are operating within certain parameters in American foreign policy that are reinforced and informed by, because they talk to the American people everyday, what the American people think. So, I think that is the issue. It has always been the case that American leaders don't always follow the opinion polls. We're a republic; this is not a direct democracy.

You can certainly point to occasions over the years where the American people were right and their leaders were wrong. But I can show you the case of the opposite whether the civil war, which was deeply unpopular, and look at how America is today, or in the 1950s, on the issue of civil rights, that the entire American people did not agree with, but thank God we did it, or you just mentioned Iraq, that if the leaders in America had followed the opinion poll, we would have been out of Iraq years ago. You can make the case that, because of George Bush's steadfastness, we are actually getting the result finally after years of bad policies in

Iraq. So, American leaders won't always follow the opinion polls. So, what has formed the U.S. foreign policy? U.S. interests, and certainly I think there's always a healthy dose, and there has been since Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, of idealism in foreign policy but it is a mix of those two things that have always formed U.S. policy.

Question 6: Mr. Yao Wen, Embassy of the People's Republic of China: Thanks for your clear and concise remarks, and for your advice for China's leadership as to what we're facing. Actually, that is what China is doing: to have more on the political reform and to accommodate the rising personal needs and concerns of the people. That is the direction where China is moving forward. But I have to point that you made a mistake when you refer to Taiwan. You said it's a country. Taiwan is part of China; definitely it's not a sovereign state.

My question is regarding the Asian policy of the U.S. There has been a sort of view circulating among US academic arenas for the last 2-3 years that the U.S. is receding in terms of influence and presence in Asia to the rise of China and the come back of Japan and India. If you read the remarks today by Lee Hsien Loong, senior Prime Minister of Singapore, as well as Mr. Surin Pitsuwan, he mentioned a lot about the weak commitment of the U.S. to Asia.

My question is: What is your view point about the status of the U.S. presence or interest in Asia? Is the U.S. influence coming down to the rise of China, India, and Japan? The other question is the U.S. policy towards ASEAN. On the one hand, what you witness is the commitment of the U.S. towards ASEAN countries bilaterally. I mean, economically, militarily, politically, there is still some presence and cooperation going on. On the other hand, you see, Secretary of State Madame Condoleezza Rice, who has been Secretary of State for the last 3 years, missed ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meetings twice. Also, the U.S. President invited leaders of ASEAN to go over to the U.S. for the commemorative summit but it was overshadowed by what happened in Myanmar. So, I don't know whether the summit will come through or not. So, you can see that the U.S. policy towards ASEAN is often interrupted by some particular issues? So, how important is ASEAN to the U.S?

Answer 6: First of all, I was not offering advice to China's leadership. I was just making an observation. The Party has been remarkably adaptable but it is also the case, in my travels since 1981, that I have seen the rise not only in material expectation but also spiritual and political expectation. The difference in, for example, watching village elections in China in some very remote areas is very impressive. But watching legal reform in the urban area is also very impressive.

But the choice that is gonna have to be made is about offering legal avenues in the rural areas. Because, you and I both know, there're a lot of issues out there in the rural area that have not been taken care of by the political choices they are offered because a lot of them do not have access to legal remedies.

On the other hand, if you go into the big cities, there is not as much political choice, and the choices that the leadership is gonna have to make is about how to reconcile all of this. I think these are gonna be very tough. So, clearly, as somebody visited China for the first time in 1981, it looked very different. Clearly, a lot of changes and progress are going to be made, but there are a lot of challenges that I think would challenge any kind of leadership.

I think anybody who critiques the U.S. for not being involved enough in Asia is right. I think, for the last 6 years, that is an absolutely justifiable opinion. It is certainly the case. Personally, I felt that I could understand for the years after 9/11 that we have such a heavy focus on the Middle East. I had hoped that in the second term our focus would have turned more to other regions in the world. You have exactly the same charge in Latin America. What is interesting to me is I don't hear leaders in either region say: "The U.S. is less engaged; thank God, they've gone home." What I hear is: "The U.S. is less engaged and we'd like to have them more engaged."

Again, not to offer a justification for, since I don't think it was justified, but I will point out, for example, that this has happened before in Asia where the U.S. has become disengaged, certainly after 1975 and well into the 1980s. That was a charge you can make. So, my great hope and great expectation, because I think in some ways the issues in the Middle East and Iraq, the temperature is beginning to

come down and solutions can be found. So, my hope is that a future Secretary of State will find himself not just dealing with Iraq and Afghanistan and the Middle East, with North Korea and Iran, etc., but is going to find more time to be able to re-engage. And I think, in very cooperative ways, in the region, we have very good relations with China and India. There is no good reason for us and China to be in competition in the region, or Europe in Latin America.

Question 7: Mrs. Nongnuth Phetcharatana, Director-General of the Department of American and South Pacific Affairs: I'm sure that many of the audience would like to hear more of your analysis of engagement. What type of engagement the U.S. may have in the next administration, especially on Southeast Asia and ASEAN? I'm sure we would look for a more consistent and pleasant engagement. So, just to elaborate this, will there be any difference between the Republican and the Democratic administration on this?

Answer 7: That's a very good question as to what kind of engagement? I heard critiques in the first term that the U.S. was turning up. China was turning up to the ASEAN meetings and talking about a range of issues, and America was turning up at the ASEAN forum and all they wanted to talk about was terrorism. The U.S. was turning up with the ASEAN issues for all they want to talk about is terrorism. And I think that is probably correct. As the temperature of war in Iraq goes down, there is hope we can find solutions as well as being engaged more broadly geographically; we will also engage on a wider range of topics.

I think American policy makers realize that global warming, whatever is causing it, that human beings are contributing to it and no country more than the U.S., and that we have responsibility. I think that the Americans understand the issue of energy supply, dependence on oil, dirty coal, which we the Indians and China all use. Those are the issues that we can engage on. I think you will find more engagement also on economic issues. It came to be that in the 1990s, American Ambassadors spent eighty percent of their time on economic issues and not on political and military. That is again reversed. But I think you will find it coming back. So, I think on a broad range of issues, the Democrats are a little broader because Republicans are always very conscious with security issues. But, I think any

administration you are gonna find them more engaged geographically and also on a broad arrange of issues.

Question 8: Mr. Krit Kraichitti, Director-General of the Department of International Economic Affairs: My question is about the foreign economic policy of the new U.S. Government. How would the U.S. address global economic issues? The U.S. is playing a major role in the global economic systems, trade, finance, and investment, and so on. So, with the rise of China as a new economic power, we are having so much concern about more and more protective measures for trade from developing countries. Also, the sub-prime crisis in the U.S. now raise concerns for people in Asia whether we will be receiving the effects of domestic problem and enter another financial crisis.

Answer 8: One of the disadvantages to the openness of the global economic system is that when we have a problem in the U.S., EU, or China, it is not just isolated to that country. And so, there are down sides to having a more open world economic system. This is an area where I do think you will find some differences. I think in general Republicans remained committed to free trade and to open trade, and there is no better advocate on those two issues than Bob Zoellick, who was U.S. trade representative and No. 2 at the State Department, and is now head of the World Bank.

I was intrigued to see Hillary Clinton recently begin to back track a little bit on free trade. She is locked in this primary battle and it is not so much Barack Obama, who is pushing that, but John Edwards, who is pushing that, and he is taking votes away from her in Iowa. With a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President, I would not hold my breath on free trade agreements because labor obviously has a lot of influence. You could have said the same before Bill Clinton was elected in 1992 and he turned out to be a good advocate of free trade. And my guess is Hillary Clinton, based on her experience and her intelligence, will probably feel the same way. But I think early on, as far as free trade goes, you'll find the better advocate from our Republican President than you would from the Democrats.

Question 9: I am a political science professor. But I haven't lived in the US for over 20 years. I have noticed this phenomenon in this recent election. Both parties are

very articulate and educated, but they try to sound like the working class. What does this say about American politics? What does this do to our image in the world?

Answer 9: If you watch politicians in D.C. and if you watch them at home, they often switch their accents. Obviously, what they try to do is to sound like an ordinary person, even if they have been in Washington for 20-30 years. That's just the way politics and democracy is, I'm afraid.

Thank you all very much for the invitation and your questions.