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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE NEXT PRESIDENT

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The question that's put before us is what will American foreign policy look like under our next president? Obviously, that question is premised on who will be the next president and the answer to that is nobody knows and just to remind you of why that's the answer, let me imagine that this were September of 1991, the same amount of time ahead of the election that we are now. The conventional wisdom at that time was that George H.W. Bush was a shoo-in for reelection. So anybody who says to you we know who the next president is going to be is sticking their finger in the air and is bound to get it blown off, but I will do that, and because I am supposed to give a Democratic perspective, I'll say that I think the most likely next president is probably going to be Hillary Clinton. If you look at the latest public opinion polls that were taken last week about the candidates for the nominations of the two parties, Hillary Clinton has 47 percent support followed by Barack Obama at 25 percent support followed by John Edwards at 18 percent support. Those are the top three on the Democratic side. On the Republican side, you have Rudy Giuliani at 30 percent, Fred Thompson at 22 percent, John McCain at 18 percent, and Mitt Romney at seven percent.

Now that would suggest that Hillary is well ahead, but you have to be careful about these numbers because these are national preferences and Americans don't vote nationally in the primaries. They vote in certain states ahead of others, so you want to look at what happens in the early states and who's ahead there because the extra publicity in the balance of being the front runner is crucial in determining what happens in terms of outcomes. If you look at Iowa and New Hampshire and South Carolina, Hillary Clinton is currently ahead by 20 points in New Hampshire—her lead over Obama has been widening not diminishing, in Iowa she's in a near tie with John Edwards, and in South Carolina she's well ahead. That's particularly interesting because if that continues, she's going to get a bounce from the early polls as well as that overall national poll.

It's much more confused on the Republican side. Romney, for example, even though his national polling is seven percent, is currently ahead in Iowa and he's tied in New Hampshire, so it's a little harder to see who the Republican is likely to be. But at this stage, other things being equal, as economists like to say and as we know they never are, the prospect is Hillary would win the Democratic nomination.

Then the question is can she win the presidency, and there's a conventional wisdom which has been around for quite some time that Hillary can't win because she is such a polarizing figure. The answer to that is if you look at Hillary's behavior as a senator of New York, one of the things that's been interesting is to see how well she's done in Upstate New York, which is Republican New York. Despite her figure as a liberal Democrat who would do well in Downstate New York, she has done well as a senator in upstate as well as downstate, suggesting a bit of pragmatism there.

The second is a point that's made by Charlie Cook, who is a very good political analyst and nonpartisan. He said, "If you look at various polls about Hillary's negatives"—and he surveys all of the polls on this—"the highest I can find is 45 percent." Let me tell you, 45 percent negatives still gives you a good margin to win, and it will depend a lot on what states that comes out in, but his point is that polarizing isn't

necessarily bad. If you polarize and you put, say, 55 on your side and 45 on the other, that's still a winning strategy depending on what states it goes through.

The third argument that Hillary can't win has been that there is going to be a skeleton in the closet, that somewhere something is going to come out that's going to disrupt the campaign, that the Republicans are waiting to do a "swift boat" attack on her as they did on Kerry, and that this will come out and so what looks good in the polls now will suddenly collapse. The answer that the Clinton people give, and I have no idea whether this is correct or not, but the answer they give is, look, the market has already discounted that. If you've gone through what she's been going through for the number of years they've been going through it, most of it is going to be treated as something we've already seen. That's the prospect of why I think there's a chance that Hillary will be the next president.

If you ask who will be the Republican nominee, again it's very uncertain. A week ago I asked a Democratic National Committee member who is a Hillary supporter who she thought would be the toughest Republican for Hillary to confront. Her view was Giuliani, and she said that the reason is Giuliani, if he can get the Republican nomination despite his liberal positions on social issues like abortion and so forth and gay rights, if he can get through the Republican gauntlet of the primaries, has the great advantage that he doesn't have to run to the middle. In American politics, candidates either appeal to the left or the right depending on their parties in the primaries and then after they've won the primaries, they have to rush to capture what's left in the middle. This Clinton supporter said that the advantage that Giuliani would have is that most people already see him as in the middle, so he doesn't have to rush to the middle. So if he can get through the gauntlet of the Republic primaries, he would be a formidable candidate to compete with Hillary. Now that would lead to a very interesting American election, an all New York election, like people sometimes talk about a World Series which is an all New York World Series, well, this would be an all New York election. Whether that will happen or not, again, we don't know, but it is a possibility.

Now what are the surprises that could undo that? Again as I've mentioned, September before an election is very early. One is that somebody stumbles. Hillary or Giuliani or somebody says something and gets it wrong. Now so far, Hillary's campaign has been surprisingly well managed, and she has been a very effective campaigner, better than most people expected, but a stumble is possible. The second is something Karen mentioned, another terrorist attack and how that would affect what Giuliani's strongest issue has been—9/11 and terror, and that could be a key to a change in public opinion. A terrorist attack would play to the strength of Republicans like Giuliani or McCain. A third is a very deep recession which would presumably strengthen the Democrats over the Republicans, and a fourth is what's sometimes called the "California Divide." There is a referendum in California to divide California's electoral college votes by congressional district which essentially might give the Republicans half of California's electoral college votes, California having more than any other state, while at the same time Republican states like Texas would not divide and therefore the Republicans would get all the Democrats who voted in Texas, but they would also get the Republicans who vote in California. Nobody knows what's going to happen to this. This is a referendum issue which may or may not go through, but it is an illustration of the kind of thing that could be a joker in the deck.

Now with all those caveats about why we should be careful about this prediction of Hillary being president, if she were president, what would her foreign policy look like and the answer is it would look like Bill Clinton's foreign policy. Who are her major advisors? Well, one is Bill Clinton. A second is Madeleine Albright. A third is Sandy Berger. A fourth is Dick Holbrook. A fifth is Lee Feinstein. Another is Kurt Campbell. If you look at the people who are advising Hillary, you have seen them all before in the Clinton Administration. Are there going to be surprises in terms of the way the personnel will look at foreign policy? Probably not. If Obama were to be the Democratic nominee, the key advisors for him are people like Tony Lake, Richard Danzig, Susan Rice, Samantha Power. The first three

were also Clinton Administration officials, so I don't think that you're going to see a dramatic change in foreign policy between the leading Democratic candidates.

Let's put that through the issues that we could look at, and I'll just touch these very quickly. One question that's raised is, will there be a turn toward isolationism, sort of a post-Vietnam syndrome, post-Iraq syndrome. I think not. I think some of the biggest issues we face are, in fact, issues that do follow you home—climate, pandemics, transnational terrorism. I think the American people realize you can't turn inward and escape those.

The second issue is unilateralism and multilateralism which is a continuum, as Karen mentioned. I think the pendulum has already started swinging on this. There is a big difference between the second Bush term and the first Bush term. I think if the Democrats come in, it will swing more toward multilateralism, more emphasis on allies and institutions and so forth, but the big difference has been between Bush's first and second terms, and the difference between Bush's second term and the Democrats will be somewhat less dramatic.

The third question that's often raised is “what about realism and idealism?” Where will we be on democracy promotion and human rights? The answer is the big difference there will be on method and style. No American president is going to turn his or her back on democracy promotion. It's built into the system. Many of the speeches that George W. Bush gave, if you parse them carefully, could have been given by Harry Truman or Woodrow Wilson. The difference is the method and the style. It's sometimes said that Bush's first term was “Wilsonianism in boots” or “democracy at the end of a gun.” That will not be the Democratic method, but they will still talk a lot about democracy and human rights.

Fourth, what about an open international economy? There I think the Democrats are somewhat more protectionist than the Republicans. But on the issue of migration, which should be part of any discussion of the open international economy, the Democrats are a little bit better than the Republicans. Despite the fact that President Bush put forward a good bill, it was sunk primarily by his own party. But the differences between the two parties are not as great as they first look. The Democratic candidates have been careful not to give too many hostages to fate on protectionism, so they will talk about environmental agreements and labor standards as ways to have a bit of covert protectionism, but I don't think it's going to be in any sense a Smoot-Hawley turnaround.

On the use of force, we had a panel at the Kennedy School about two weeks ago in which we asked five people who ranged from somebody on the left who was very opposed to the war to a Republican congressman. The general consensus was that if you guessed how many troops will be in Iraq at the beginning of 2009, the answer was about 100,000. In other words it turns out, as Karen said, to be very hard to have a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. Indeed if you look at the Democratic candidates, what's interesting is that only one, Bill Richardson, who is in the top four, has actually called for full withdrawal within a year. Most of the rest have hedged their bets.

On Iran, there is a difference between the parties there. The Democrats have been fairly careful to not commit themselves. Hillary was pressed very hard on this by the moderator of the Democratic debate in New Hampshire this past week and she was careful not to give any hostages here. She didn't say anything about what she would do on the use of force in Iran, but if you contrast that with Rudy Giuliani and John McCain among the Republican candidates, they've made much more vociferous statements about the use of force against Iran.

On terrorism, I think you'll get a difference in tone. Terror will still be important, but instead of George Bush's global war on terror which is heard in most of the Muslim world as a global war on Islam, I think Democrats will turn down the rhetoric. I think in addition you'll probably get some changes on things like

how you handle Guantanamo which would tone down parts of the war on terror that have been most counterproductive.

Climate, I think you'll have considerable change, but again the change has begun. American politics on the climate issue have already begun to change. We saw that in President Bush's meeting this week in Washington. He didn't go very far on solutions, but he did finally acknowledge the problem. I think no matter who is elected in 2009, you'll see more done on climate, and though McCain is a leader on this issue, I think you'll get more from the Democrats than you will from the Republicans.

On the rise of Asia, China, and India, I think the policy will remain largely the same. This is interesting. If you look at the policy toward China, the Bush Administration pretty much picked up and kept the Clinton Administration policy toward China which I call "embrace but hedge." In other words, bring them into the WTO, trade, but reinforce our alliance with Japan so that we have a capacity to hedge against bad behavior. Also improve our relations with India. That dual track policy has worked for more than a decade and I think it's likely to continue. US politics on China is always the left and the right against the middle. There are people on the left wing of the Democratic Party and the right wing of the Republican Party who will try to change that. I don't think that's likely to succeed. I would imagine policy here would stay largely in the same track.

Those are a few of the issues. What I'm arguing is that if you have a Hillary Clinton Administration, you will probably see some changes in foreign policy, but they're not likely to be radical changes or as radical as campaign rhetoric first sounds. It's often the case in American foreign policy that some of the most important changes that occur actually start changing in the prior administration. The pendulum starts swinging before the election, and then it swings further as a result of and after the election. I think that's likely to be true in 2009 as well.

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