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Toward a Substantive Dialogue of Democracy

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I want to talk about the Presidential campaign and the dialogue of democracy.

The stakes in this election are high, at home and abroad, and the next President will have momentous choices to make, choices that will directly affect the lives of all Americans, and billions of people around the world.

A robust debate about American foreign policy and national security is surely in order. There are many questions about the war on terror, Afghanistan, Iraq, nuclear proliferation, Iran, North Korea, global trade, poverty, and tumult.

Several months ago I was hopeful that this would be a unique election, unique because foreign policy questions appeared to be playing a central role, and it seemed they would be seriously addressed. And to some extent, the Presidential debate has focussed on the war on terror, at least parts of it.

But a familiar disappointment strikes me every four years. Each presidential election, I hope for a serious, civil, enlightening discussion of foreign policy challenges. Each time I have been disappointed.

In campaigns, foreign policy is usually referred to in generalities with references to "leadership," "strength" and "security." This campaign is no different. There is a glaring lack of discussion about a plan in Iraq, or on the generational struggle against Islamist terrorism, or for securing the world's most dangerous weapons.

The words "Iran" and "North Korea" hardly ever come up. Indeed, they are mentioned about as frequently as the

word "terrorism" was mentioned in the 2000 campaign. In that election, even after the first World Trade Center bombing, the embassy bombings, the Millennium plot, and the bombing of the *USS Cole* in October 2000, the 9/11 Commission was able to find only one use of the word "terrorism" in the campaign.

In this campaign, at least from my perception, there has been an extraordinary emphasis on the past events that happened 35 years ago. The candidates are spending too much time looking back and not enough time looking forward. I believe the American voter cares more about the choices the candidates offer for tomorrow than the choices they made decades ago.

What bothers me, this year as in the past, is that we are missing a real opportunity to address global challenges and the U.S. role in the world. In a democracy, it is not only the choices that you make which are important; it is also the manner in which you make those choices. The 2004 election may prove to be a precursor to extraordinary choices, but you wouldn't know that from the campaign. . . .

The Issues

Let me suggest some questions that I would place on the foreign policy agenda, along with some of my own views.

For most voters, terrorism and Iraq are understandably at the top of the list. But these two issues should not constitute the beginning and end of the foreign policy debate.

The war on terror is a great test for American foreign policy. But terrorism and Iraq are only parts of a swelling turmoil. Conflict, violence, proliferation, repression, poverty, inequality, disease, and environmental degradation are spiraling out of control in parts of the world. Great power politics, alliances, and the global economy are shifting.

So we should not approach terrorism and Iraq in a vacuum. Our efforts on these issues are tied to our efforts on a host of other challenges.

The overarching question for the next President, whether President Bush or Senator Kerry, is: How do you intend to use unrivalled American power and our blend of idealism and pragmatism to help the U.S. preserve American security and global stability? How will you define global stability? What threats do you see? And how do you plan to deal with them?

1. Terrorism

All Americans should ask the candidates: How do you plan to wage the war on terror? For instance, how do you, President Bush and Senator Kerry, define the enemy? In the 9/11 Commission, we said the enemy is twofold: al-Qaeda, the terrorist network that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement across the Islamic world, inspired in part by al Qaeda, which has spawned more terrorist groups and violence. . . .

2. Nuclear Proliferation

Turning to another challenge: How will you, President Bush and Senator Kerry, restrict the proliferation of nuclear

weapons? I would place the growing danger from nuclear weapons at the top of the list of issues for the candidates. Nuclear terrorism is our nightmare scenario. . . .

3. Iran and North Korea

The nuclear issue leads to an urgent question for the candidates: what will you do about Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs?

We should not let the candidates avoid talking in detail about Iran and North Korea just because there are no easy options for dealing with them. Both countries are openly hostile to the U.S., and both have or are close to having a nuclear weapon. Four years from now, the next Administration will probably have faced one of the following:

1. a military confrontation with one or both countries;
2. the acceptance of one or two new members of the nuclear club;
3. or a peaceful resolution of differences with one or both countries that leads to their nuclear disarmament.

What choices can we make to advance the third outcome? . . .

4. The Middle East

And, of course, there is the perennial challenge for American foreign policy: what is the comprehensive plan for peace, stability and security in the Middle East? This breaks down into multiple thorny challenges for U.S. policy:

Iraq: Iraq will and should be a central issue. In many respects, President Bush and Senator Kerry will be responding to unpredictable events in the coming weeks: the rate of U.S. casualties, the strain on U.S. forces, the widening insurgency, the performance of the Iraqi interim government, and the potential for civil war or chaos. The problems in Iraq may not be cause for despair, but they are cause for deep concern.

We need more than statements responding to headlines. Both President Bush and Senator Kerry must answer key questions:

- How do we use the dominance of the U.S. military without raising strong resentment, even hate, against the U.S. presence? How can we restore security?
- What role will our allies play?
- What will Iraq's government look like? Can we keep the country unified?
- Is the effort to create democracy in the Middle East beyond our capacity? What are the costs in military and financial terms for pursuing this goal?
- What are our end goals? Do we aim to build a full democracy, or do we simply seek stability? And, of course, how long will we stay in Iraq?

From my perspective, we need patience and sacrifice. We also need more troops from the U.S., our allies, and Iraqis. That means training Iraqi security forces; welcoming all Iraqis to the political process if they reject violence; seeking and cultivating stable, credible and popular Iraqi groups; and moderating the grander visions of democracy in Iraq and

throughout the Middle East. The goal should be a stable, unified, non-threatening Iraq.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Both candidates should also have to face the tough question: How will you resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

No other issue polarizes relations between the U.S. and the Islamic world as much as this one. Stability in the Middle East will never be achieved without a solution. The current situation raises immediate questions for whoever becomes the next President, centered around the overarching question of how we advance peace:

- Should we support Prime Minister Sharon's security barrier and proposal for withdrawal from Gaza?
- How do we help reform the Palestinian Authority while combating Palestinian terrorism?
- What next for the Road Map?

This issue is always complicated in American politics. We are a steadfast ally of Israel. And we also have a national interest in a peaceful two-state solution.

My view is that we need to engage as an honest broker pushing both sides to take simultaneous steps to freeze settlements and halt violence. We must commit to a vigorous peace process and put the final status issues—borders, refugees, and Jerusalem—on the table now. American political capital and resources should be invested in reaching a settlement.

5. Great Powers

The next President will have to deal with China, Russia and Europe. . . .

6. Trade

We must also ask the candidates: What are your positions on trade? What will you do about competition from China in manufacturing, and India in services? . . .

7. Swelling Turmoil

Global Poverty: Finally, what do you have to say, President Bush and Senator Kerry, about global poverty and suffering? Of the 6 billion people on Earth:

- half of them live on less than \$2 a day;
- 3 billion are under 25;
- HIV/AIDS continues to plague Africa and is making inroads in other countries;
- environmental degradation looms on the horizon;
- and the migration of peoples continues to sow conflict and instability. . . .

What happens in a Presidential election matters a lot. And when this election is over, someone will have to govern this politically divided country, and deal with the challenges I have outlined, not to mention the unexpected ones. We will be better able to face those challenges if we have explored the choices before us through vigorous dialogue and debate. . . .

In this critical period in the life of our Nation, you and I should expect, indeed demand, that candidates for President tell us how they will provide leadership for extraordinary times. Otherwise we leave tomorrow's history to chance, not choice.