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Session 1

The State of the Foreign Policy in the US

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Session 1, US Strategy in Foreign Affairs and the Forthcoming World Order

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1. The Deadlock in Iraq

Conflicting developments in Iraq: progress toward constitutional democracy, but increasingly growing pressure for the US military to quit in the US.

US is not losing as it did in Vietnam, but it is not winning impressively.

There is some progress. Election in January this year. Referendum on the Constitution in October. But the number of the casualties of Americans has reached 2,000.

Public opinion in the US has been against Iraq since last year.

The things that we need to keep in mind:

The insurgency in Iraq is still rampant, crippling the reconstruction seriously, but it will be hard for it to win and successfully govern Iraq. This is different from Vietnam, where the government of North Vietnam finally united the whole Vietnam by force. Very probably, Iraq will be eventually governed by elected officials with democratic legitimacy.

The inability of the US to continue the large-scale reconstruction, rehabilitation aid, or occupation with heavy casualties, whatever the rhetoric of the President. It is evident in Afghanistan, and it could become more visible regarding Iraq in the coming years.

2. Lessons Learned from Iraq

Neo-conservatives argument for the democratization of Iraq discredited.

Discredited neo-conservatives rhetoric: easy job to democratize Iraq, no burden for US taxpayers or US allies, US military welcomed by Iraqis as a liberator.

It is easy to win the war but hard to win the peace.

Especially for the US, it is hard to complete the mission of occupation that will take many years.

Eventually, populism might prevail, which dictates that US military quit soon.

John F. Kerry, initially talking a lot about the American responsibility, appealed and succumbed to anti-war populist sentiments at the base of the Democratic Party.

Growing awareness that the Iraq War is different from anti-terrorism measures.

If attacked by terrorists again, which is fairly probable, US will respond strongly, resolutely. But US will, and has to, be cautious about another preemptive attack or preventive war.

However, it is important to remember that the UN and most of the major countries were not effective enough in stopping Saddam Hussein's challenge to the UN-imposed sanctions and inspections. It is only through the threat of force and large-scale military mobilization by the US that Saddam accepted the UN inspection. We have to be aware of this prehistory of Iraq War.

3. The Bush Administration in trouble

Growing public wariness for further military intervention abroad unless attacked directly.

President's approval rate around 36 to 45%

Still haunted by Katrina.

Partial privatization plan of pension stalled, even criticized by religious conservatives.

General public is against the plan.

High gas prices.

Anger among conservatives against the nomination of Harriet Miers for supreme court judge.

Still no exit in sight for Iraq.

No breakthrough in North Korea, or Iran.

Scandals involving Tom DeLay, Bill Frist, Karl Rove, and Lewis Libby.

4. Forthcoming American politics and foreign policy

The Democrats are getting reinvigorated, reactivated. Especially its anti-war liberal wing is looking forward to the coming elections.

It is probable that the Republicans lose seats in the 2006 mid-term election.

It is impossible to predict the outcome of 2008 Presidential election. Hillary Clinton v. who? Or someone from the South instead of Clinton?

There is no star in the conservative wing of the Republican Party, whereas unorthodox candidates like Giuliani or McCain has charisma and overwhelming popularity.

What if, for example, one of them wins the nomination for the President for the Republican Party? It might cause a lot of confusion among the Democrats, forcing a major change in their strategy and political calculations.

Anyway, a major change in the foreign policy outlook is not unlikely.

Fluctuations are a major feature of American foreign policy in the past two or three decades, which is accelerated by the ever growing partisanship and ideological division of American political parties and politics.

5. US-China relations: Bound to be unstable

While economic ties are deepening between US and China, that does not mean that the bilateral relations will be all the more stable.

China is a divisive political issue both in the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Unions and human rights groups are the pillars of the anti-China forces in the Democrats, while some of the New Democrats are eager to envision better relations with China like Clinton did. On one hand, business interests would like to have stable relations with China on the Republican side. On the other, there are military hawks, ideological anti-communists, conservative Christians, and those sympathetic with Taiwan and Tibet that consistently look at China with deep suspicion in the Republican Party.

Given the partisan atmosphere of current American politics, there is a tendency for the opposition party to attack the Administration's China policy, whatever it is.

Especially US Congress is a bastion of anti-China forces. Their presence is more permanent than the Administration. Congress is consistently more critical of China than the Executive Branch is. Sometimes, the left and the right there, crossing the party line, conspire to form a formidable coalition that is very tough with China.

Trade conflict could get very nasty, because politicians can combine trade and other criticisms such as that there is no human rights, or no union rights.

As far as China does not give up a hope to regain Taiwan by force, it will not or it cannot be a stabilizing force in the world.

6. US-Japan relations for the near future

Peculiar, asymmetric shape of the alliance. Rights and obligations are not symmetrical.

The right to use the military bases in Japan for the security and peace in the Far East, the obligation to defend Japan.

The bottom line: Japan does not have to defend US when US is attacked.

During the Cold War, it did not have to think about this possibility.

In 2001, US was in fact attacked, and Japan had to think about what to do.

Is the alliance sustainable if Japan does nothing to help US when it is attacked?

But if it fights with US for US, it incurs an extra obligation other than to let US use the military bases in Japan.

Does the public know that? Will the public accept it?

Constitution will be amended in the near future, and the right to collective self-defense will be written into the Constitution. In the long-term, this will contribute to the stability of not only the US-Japan relations but also that of the entire Asia.