



# By the People

## America in the World

*This discussion guide is intended to serve as a jumping-off point for our upcoming conversation. Please remember that the discussion is not a test of facts, but rather an informal dialogue about your perspectives on the issues.*

## NATIONAL SECURITY: LOOKING AHEAD

### WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM?

The events of September 11, 2001, shattered America's sense of security and shifted our country's approach to foreign policy. The war on terrorism is now front and center in our national security strategy. Like other nations, we face potential terrorist threats not only from abroad but also within our borders. While our leaders debate the best way to fight the war on terrorism, we will discuss four of the most important parts of this discussion: the use of preemptive military action, the relationships we have with our allies, the priority we give to civil liberties in our pursuit of homeland security, and whether or not spreading democracy to other countries should be a priority.



#### **PREEMPTIVE ACTION: Does the war on terrorism require preemptive U.S. military action?**

Some believe that preemptive attacks are an important tool in the war on terrorism. Preemptive attacks are military actions against countries and groups we view as having the capacity to harm us and the intention to do so. Supporters of a preemptive attack policy say new threats in today's war on terrorism-- including the risk that nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists-- are so dangerous that we cannot wait to be threatened with an actual attack. They also say that America's old strategy of containing and deterring threats doesn't work against terrorist networks without a nation or citizens to defend.

Some critics of the idea of preemptive attack say war should only be used as a last resort. They argue that preemption can make war more likely rather than less because other countries can also choose to strike first rather than risk a possible attack. Other critics point out that it's too hard to determine which countries pose enough of a threat to justify a preemptive strike. They say

that a preemptive strike approach relies too much on uncertain intelligence information to figure out whether a country or terrorist group has the power to attack us and is actually likely to. Also, while we can strike countries relatively easily, it's more difficult to hit shadowy networks of terrorists.



America used a preemptive strike in Iraq. Supporters of this move said we should take military action to topple Saddam Hussein's government before Iraq could get or distribute weapons of mass destruction, and because it seemed likely that Hussein had assisted terrorists or might well do so. Supporters say that this action has deterred other rogue regimes, like Libya. Critics note that the bipartisan 9/11 commission recently found "no credible evidence" that Hussein helped al Qaeda target the U.S. And, as late as September 1<sup>st</sup>, no evidence has been discovered that Iraq had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

## **SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE POLICY:**

- To prevent future attacks, we should take military action against countries and terrorist groups that, in our judgment, pose an immediate threat to us, whether they have attacked us or not.
- We should use preventative strikes against terrorist groups that threaten us, but we should only invade other countries when we are sure they pose imminent danger.
- We must never engage in preemptive military action. We may inspire other countries to act preemptively, making wars more likely around the globe.



### **WORKING WITH ALLIES VS. GOING IT ALONE: In a post-9/11 world, what is the right balance between working with our allies and "going it alone" to ensure our safety?**

The case of Iraq is an example of this debate. In March 2003, after failing to get support from the United Nations (U.N.), America acted with a limited coalition to attack Iraq, and toppled the government of Saddam Hussein. Supporters say the urgency of the Iraqi threat to the United States justified America acting without waiting for approval from the U.N. or many of our traditional allies. Critics note that our action has inflamed anti-American feeling abroad and may make it difficult for us to get international support in the future. They also say that “going it alone” has come at a huge military and financial price.

As of early September 2004, America had more than 130,000 troops in Iraq, with about 1,000 killed and more than 6,000 wounded. The U.S. has spent around 102 billion dollars for the military campaign in Iraq, with a request for an additional \$25 billion pending. Another \$21 billion has been earmarked for reconstruction of Iraq.

In spring of 2004, with violence spreading and Iraqis impatient for power, America changed course and turned to the U.N. to help establish a new Iraqi government. The U.N. envoy to Iraq led the handover of sovereignty to the Iraqis on June 28—a first step toward a national election in Iraq in January 2005.



After the handover, the U.S. Administrator in charge of post-war Iraq was replaced by an Iraqi prime minister and governing council. However, the U.S. military continues to take on most of the responsibility for Iraqi security and is under strain to keep the necessary troop numbers in the region. Our forces are joined by 17,000 troops from coalition countries, led by Great Britain. Terrorist attacks on coalition troops and citizens inside and outside Iraq have weakened the coalition, with countries like Spain and the Philippines pulling out troops.

## **SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALLIES:**

- U.S. Action Alone: The U.S. must take the lead in dealing with new threats, with or without international support. With great power comes great responsibility.
- Acting with the UN and NATO: Whenever possible, the U.S. should act with established alliances, like the U.N. and NATO, to deal with threats. These structures offer our best hope for promoting responsible behavior worldwide.
- Acting with other Allies: The U.S. should work with allies to deal with threats, but it may need to work outside the UN and NATO framework. We may need to create new international institutions to deal with global terrorism.
- Reduce Global Responsibilities: We can't be the world's policeman. We should concentrate on protecting our borders and dealing with specific threats to us.

## **CIVIL LIBERTIES: How do we build a proper balance between our civil liberties and our country's homeland security in this new war on terrorism?**

The Patriot Act is an example of the current debate over civil liberties in the war on terrorism. The USA Patriot Act was enacted after the 9/11 attacks and has drawn legal challenges as well as debate over its renewal in 2005. The law makes it easier for officials to conduct wiretaps and surveillance, share information between agencies, track Internet usage, and search medical and library records without a search warrant. Supporters say the Patriot Act has ended the division between law enforcement and intelligence officers, allowing them to work together to prevent future attacks.

Critics warn that the Patriot Act goes too far and intrudes on the privacy of law-abiding citizens, including searches of personal records and property. Critics also say our government is stepping on the civil liberties of both U.S. citizens and foreigners. They point out that we

are detaining prisoners without formal charges or hearings at prisons such as the one at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and that we are limiting the access of foreign students, scientists and business people by hassling them over their visas. Critics see potential for creating hostility and isolation among the foreign-born in this country and worry America will lose credibility on the issue of civil liberties on the world stage.



Others say that we can do a great deal more to beef up Homeland Security without having to sacrifice our civil liberties. We need to increase funding to better protect our airports, seaports, and borders and harden vulnerable targets like nuclear power plants and support emergency responders.

## **SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO BALANCING CIVIL LIBERTIES AND HOMELAND SECURITY:**

- Stay the course with intelligence-gathering and detentions. Renew the Patriot Act, maintaining measures that increase domestic security.
- Be cautious about infringements on civil liberties. Amend Patriot Act with safeguards on use of wiretaps and records-seizing. Stop indefinitely detaining U.S. citizens and expand rights, such as access to a lawyer, to those detained.
- Spend the resources to protect our most vulnerable targets, such as airports, seaports and borders.

### **SPREADING DEMOCRACY: Should spreading democracy to other countries be a priority in the war on terrorism?**

Part of our security strategy is to spread democracy around the globe. Supporters say that building democracy abroad not only promotes freedom and justice in other countries, it helps make the United States safer, since democratic states tend to avoid going to war with one another. Supporters of this approach say that encouraging democracy may stem fundamentalism, tame rogue states that might sponsor terrorists, and give opportunities to individuals who might turn to terror out of frustration. Supporters believe we can promote democracy in a number of ways, including using foreign aid as an incentive, encouraging the growth of free market economics, and using military action to replace non-democratic governments.

Critics worry that the military and financial costs of this approach are too high. They think we will anger other nations who don't support our attempts to impose our democratic values. Critics warn that we cannot expect to build democracy in Iraq the same way we built it in post-war Japan or Germany, which we occupied with strong world support and which had

different cultures and histories of democracy. Some of those who support the general strategy of building democracies note that it can run counter to effective government in some countries with authoritarian regimes.

An example of this issue is Afghanistan, where the U.S. is leading an effort to bring democracy. In response to the events of 9/11, we launched a



military offensive which overthrew the Taliban government-- which was protecting Osama bin Laden and his associates-- and captured or killed two-thirds of al Qaeda's known leaders in the region. The country plans to hold its first direct presidential election in October. However, many note the tremendous work left to be done there. The central government's authority is mainly limited to the area around the capital, while warlords control most regions and keep personal militias intact. As of late August, there were at least 16,000 U.S. troops in the area, and there is continuing terrorist violence.

## SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO SPREADING DEMOCRACY:

- Actively spread democratic values across the globe to enhance our safety. Political oppression tends to breed terrorism.
- Support emerging democracies, but don't push democracy on others. We may anger other nations who don't wish us to impose our political values. And we may find ourselves financially and militarily over-committed.
- Promote human rights and economic development, but do not seek to impose particular institutions. Democracy takes time to develop.



# AMERICAN JOBS IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

## WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO TO PROTECT OR GROW AMERICAN JOBS?

For the first time, we have a truly global economy. Globalization-- the growing interconnectedness of each country-- has brought hope that the U.S. economy and employment will grow as new markets open up. It has, however, also brought a worry that the quality and security of jobs in the U.S. may be in danger, as "good jobs" move abroad. Of the many factors related to employment, we will discuss how trade, outsourcing, and taxes can affect existing American jobs and the prospects for growth in the American economy.



### **TRADE: How do we approach trade in a way that will expand and secure American jobs?**

Some people believe free trade—trade with other countries without any barriers like tariffs, quotas or subsidies—is best for our economy and also for economies around the world. They say it opens up new markets for us to sell our goods and services and will ultimately make the U.S. more competitive and innovative as businesses adapt to keep America competitive. All of this leads to economic growth and better-paying jobs. Supporters of free trade warn that if we try to protect our markets with special measures we risk losing access to markets in other countries and also risk making our own industries less competitive.

Critics of free trade say it sounds good in theory, but it hasn't worked out so well in practice. Some critics say it has mostly helped large corporations at the expense of the environment and workers around the globe. Others say that the international organizations that govern free trade, like the World Trade Organization (WTO), are secretive and undemocratic. They also say that international trade agreements undercut each nation's individual power by taking away some decision-making



authority from national governments and giving it to international groups like the WTO.

Other critics say that, while free trade does have benefits, we must take certain steps to protect ourselves and the world from its negative effects. They say it is important to focus on improving labor and environmental standards in other countries. This would protect the environment and improve working conditions around the world. It would also make U.S. companies and workers more competitive with those abroad.

Other critics suggest we should go even further and protect important American products and industries, like farmers or steelworkers, from global competition. Yet others believe that it is important for developing countries to be given some protection against free trade -- by setting minimum prices for certain products in places like Africa, for example -- so that their economies have a fair chance to mature and compete on the global stage.

### **SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO TRADE:**

- Free trade is the best route to economic growth and jobs. Greater competition and new markets may build greater strength and productivity.
- Free trade is important, but we must insist on basic international labor and environmental standards. These standards will protect U.S. workers from unfair competition abroad and keep our shared environment clean.
- We must use tariffs and subsidies to protect certain American jobs and industries, which are too important to our way of life to let die.



### **OUTSOURCING: Will policies that restrict outsourcing help or hurt the American economy?**

Some believe a main focus of our economic policy should be to prevent American companies from moving jobs to other countries in search of cheaper workers. They see this practice, known as “outsourcing,” as a major cause of recent and future job loss, as high tech and manufacturing jobs move overseas. They want to make changes to international tax law, which currently provides breaks for companies that send American jobs outside our borders. They also want to change tax law, which encourages companies abroad to keep profits there instead of reinvesting in America.

Critics of this view say that companies must try to produce goods ever more cheaply in order to

meet consumer demand. The answer to outsourcing is to make America more competitive in the global marketplace, which will lead to more and better U.S. jobs in the long run. Many do not even agree that outsourcing is a major employment issue. They argue that outsourcing has at the most contributed to a loss of less than a million jobs to date out of 140 million in our labor force. However, other experts say this is only the beginning of a growing trend as high-skilled jobs can be sent abroad more easily in an interconnected global economy.



## SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO OUTSOURCING:

- Protect American workers from outsourcing by changing tax law that may encourage companies to move jobs offshore.
- Don't change tax laws to discourage outsourcing, but require companies to provide retraining for displaced workers.
- Create good jobs by focusing more on the general health of our economy and opening new markets for American products and services.



## TAXES: What is the best tax policy to help grow jobs and our economy?

There are many types of taxes. The present administration has cut taxes on investment income and is phasing in a repeal of the estate tax. But our discussion centers on personal income tax. Some see personal income tax cuts as an important way to stimulate growth and create jobs for all in our economy. They believe when families have more money, they buy more goods and services. And with more demand, businesses hire more workers. The Bush administration has recently lowered personal income tax rates across the board, which they say helped push real after-tax incomes up by 10 percent since December 2000. They also doubled the tax credit for each child.

Critics of this approach say that the recent tax cuts mainly helped the very wealthiest 2% of Americans and will not lift the economy and create jobs for the country as a whole. They disagree that America's recent income picture is better for all citizens and note that median family income has dropped by nearly \$1500

since 2000. They argue the rich should not get a tax break, but instead, taxes should be cut to raise middle-class incomes. They say cuts



targeted at the less well-off will have an immediate stimulating effect to the entire economy because the less money you have, the more likely you are to spend your tax cut money.

Other critics worry that all of this tax-cutting is putting our country's finances in the red. They note that we had a budget surplus right before the recent tax cuts, but we have a projected \$422 billion deficit this year. And budget deficits are bad for our economy in the long run. Some have warned that big government borrowing, which comes with a deficit, crowds out private companies' ability to borrow money needed to grow and compete. They note that a big deficit will limit our government's ability to pay Social Security and Medicare benefits to baby boomers as they begin retiring over the next decade.

## SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO TAXES:

- All tax cuts help create jobs. We should make recent tax cuts permanent to spur growth and investment in the economy.
- Deficits threaten long-term economic prosperity. We should repeal some of the recent tax cuts and focus on cutting the budget deficit. Any tax cuts should be targeted to working families.
- We should focus on eliminating the budget deficit and stop cutting taxes.



**ADDITIONAL READING:** It is not necessary for you to do any additional reading. However, if you are interested, you will find suggestions for further reading on these subjects at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/events/background-materials.html> on the *By the People* website. You can access this site from your personal computer or those at your local library.



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