I'm going to start with politics and end up with foreign policy. And, yes, I will challenge the conventional wisdom and be somewhat optimistic. The conventional wisdom is to be cynical about politics. You know, the American political system is blocked, it can't do anything. It is controlled by big money, nothing happens. A year or two ago everybody said, well, I can predict the outcomes—it's Bush, Clinton, Bush, Clinton. Big money will control it. Well, it's been a year of surprises, as Ken pointed out in his comments. That strikes me as a sign of health, not sickness.

A Republican political consultant, not Ken, came to the Kennedy School to talk to us a year ago. He said it was pretty clear that the two finalists were going to be John Edwards and Mitt Romney. This is a guy who makes his living doing this. The point is the surprises are healthy.

David Bradley, who is one of our members and publishes a wonderful journal on American politics, called The National Journal, asks political insiders to do a poll and sample the conventional wisdom. Let me read to you the poll from the latest issue of The National Journal, which I urge you all to look at, terrific journal.

Which democratic presidential candidate would do better against John McCain in November? Among Democrats, 41 percent said Clinton, 54 percent say Obama. Of Republicans asked the same question, 53 percent say Clinton, 45 percent say Obama. If this is rigged, if we know the answers, it's interesting that the insiders don't. The point that I want to make is American politics are going through a fascinating change, and I don't think we've paid enough attention to it.

David mentioned the book that I've just written on the power to lead, the central theme of which is we are moving from worlds of hierarchies to networks. In a hierarchy, you can do command and control and give orders from the top with your hard power. In the network, you're in the middle of circle, and you've got to track people to use more soft power. And the nature of leadership is changing.

What's fascinating is the role that the Internet is playing in this election, which is the ultimate network politics. Go back to 1955 or `56, and Dwight Eisenhower's campaigns. You know how Eisenhower campaigned? Primarily by train, giving a speech on the back of a platform. By 1960, television becomes king. You have the Nixon/Kennedy debates. Then you have the rise of the 30-second negative ad. And what do you need for that? You need a lot, a lot of money. And that gets you to the big donors and raising
big money from big donors.

Contrast that with this year, in which what you're saying is the rise of the little donor. Look at the numbers, and again, this is substantiated in *The National Journal* articles. In the year 2004, John Kerry raised six million dollars from donors who were giving less than $200. That's called little donors. By February of this year, Barack Obama had raised 76 million dollars from little donors. The nice thing about little donors, you can keep going back to them again and again and again. And he has. Obama has been able to use the Internet, building on work that was done in 2004, and even hints of it in the 2000 election, to really change American politics. A million volunteers in Mybarackobama.com. These are people who are calling each other, who are doing what's called “peer-to-peer” networking.

I have a son who is a CEO of a Web 2.0 company called LinkedIn. He said to me, you know, Dad, you don't get it. What you've got to understand is that of the generation that you're talking about, people in their 20s and so, they get their news through social networking. They go to Facebook for news. Or if you look at the Obama speech in reply to the Jeremiah Wright questions, 5.3 million people saw it within a few days on YouTube.

Now compare that to MSNBC or CNN, about two or three times the size of the audience. This is a very different world. And the ability to use this new type of politics, to get a new kind of leader who can manage this type of politics, I think is something very refreshing in the American political system.

Now this doesn't mean that Obama is going to win – I just quoted you the figures about the experts who don't know the answer to that. But it does say that instead of being cynical about American politics being locked in a predictable cycle of a few dynasties with big money using TV to dominate, no, we've seen some wonderful, interesting changes in the American political process this year. I think that's a source of optimism, no matter how it turns out.

In fact, on the question of how it turns out, I would echo what Strobe said. If I looked at the 16 or so people who were candidates for president a year ago, some of them scared the death out of me. But if I look at the three finalists, we really wound up with three very good finalists. The political system has produced a reasonably good set of people to handle these difficult problems which have been described in the foreign policy area.

With that little note of optimism, let me put in first a caveat and then turn to foreign policy. What I said about new voters and Obama and the Internet have mobilized people into the political process, younger people in particular, who have not voted before – there is still a question will they vote in November? And part of that will depend upon how the Democratic circular firing squad executes its prisoners. We are in the process where it's possible you can alienate and turn off this great infusion of new voters. But, on the other hand, nothing is certain from what I've said. On the other hand, the fact that American politics is able to transform itself strikes me as a sign of health, not of cynicism.
Now let me turn from that to foreign policy. I agree very much in this case with what Strobe and Karen said. The new president is going to have an in-box full of intractable problems. The biggest problem for the new president is going to be to make sure that he doesn't wind up with Bush's foreign policy in his inbox or her in-box. That is going to be crucial. In other words, once you mess up Iran or Iraq or Pakistan or so forth, that will eat you alive. And, before you know it, people will say, now what's the difference between this foreign policy and the last foreign policy? Unless the new president uses the very early part of the presidency starting in November, right after the election, to set a new tone, the inherited problems in the in-box, which we've heard so well described, are going to eat them up. That means that it's important to get ahead of this and to express a new theme before you have to deal with these intractable problems.

Rich Armitage and I, Rich being an advisor to McCain and obviously Republican, co-chaired something we called the Smart Power Commission, which was managed by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. What we were doing there was trying to get 20 Republicans and Democrats to come together on a common foreign policy agenda. What's remarkable is a little bit like Dr. Johnson's dog walking on its hind legs. It's not does it do it well, it's does it do it all? We got 20 people on a bipartisan basis to argue for this new type of foreign policy, this new tone. One of the things we said in this report was we have been exporting fear, not hope, and it's time to get back to the opposite. We need a foreign policy which will stress themes like taking the lead on climate change, taking the lead on energy security, taking a much higher prominence for development, working on global public health issues, and, above all, restoring our alliances and reinvigorating international institutions. This was bipartisan. It was not a criticism of the Bush Administration. Many of these people had served in the Bush Administration.

This last Thursday, Rich and I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the Smart Power Commission Report. One of the things that intrigued me was, first of all, that eight senators showed up, which, on a morning session at the end of the week, is remarkable in itself. But also there was no difference between the four Republicans and the four Democrats in terms of how they responded to the kinds of recommendations we're making. There is a felt need for change, a felt need for change in American foreign policy. And though the new president is going to inherit an intractable in-box, the key question is will he or she be able to set a tone of a new foreign policy before all these awful problems begin to eat them alive and he or she winds up with Bush's foreign policy. That will be the test of this new type of leader I hope we'll be seeing coming out of network politics.

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