

## THE BATTLE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

As Indo-US engagement deepens, New Delhi is also increasingly sensitive to the political developments within the United States. Understanding the internal dynamics in the US from an Indian perspective has become an urgent necessity for the Indian policy and business communities. The United States Studies Programme of the Observer Research Foundation hopes to meet this requirement. The *ORF Monitor* aims to provide a weekly assessment on the November elections to the White House. We welcome comments and suggestions on the Monitor.



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### **US Policy Towards Asia: The Republican View**

**By Sonika Gupta**

The events of 9/11 and the war on Iraq have irrevocably changed the orientation of American policy towards Asia. In fact, Asia has never been more important in a Presidential election in the United States. The protracted conflict in Iraq and the ongoing political wrangle over North Korean nuclear weapons have forced the US to reprioritize its power projection resources to protect US interests from existing and emerging threats in Asia. President Bush's announcement regarding US troop redistribution over the next decade was a clear statement of changing US priorities and the Republican platform reiterates this.

The Republican platform, promising a "safer and more hopeful America", locates the sources of most threats to the US in Asia. Chief among these are North Korea and Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and transnational networks forged by the *Al Qaeda*. Winning the war on terror has been listed as the top priority of the Republican Party, ahead of building an innovative economy. One of the defining strategies of the Bush administration's War on Terror is to confront terrorists overseas so that they do not have to be confronted at home on American soil. This, in practice, translates into identifying and transforming "outlaw" regimes that support terrorists and destroying transnational terrorist networks located mostly in Asia. Tracking and preventing terrorists' access to weapons of mass destruction is a central part of the war on terror. Preemptive action to "forestall or prevent hostile acts by adversaries" is mentioned as a possible option for checking the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

The Middle East is clearly one of the most important geo-strategic areas for the US in any future strategic policy. Promoting democracy in the Middle East provides the

political component of the broader Republican strategy to win the war on terror. The underlying political logic is that democracies do not promote terrorism. The statement mentions, “the events in broader Middle East will set the course for the victory of free nations in the War on Terror.” In support of President Bush’s “Forward Strategy of Freedom in the Middle East” is a proposal for doubling the National Endowment for Democracy. The Republicans also sketch out a specific vision of democracy in Middle East that is premised on “ free elections, free markets, free speech and free labour unions.” In fact, this clearly defined framework of democracy seems suspiciously like a preparation for regime change in countries that are seen to threaten US interests. Here the present Iranian government comes in for a stinging criticism as country that continues to oppress its people, pursue WMDs and support terror. It is then clearly a hurdle in the way of winning the war on terror and will have to be tackled sooner or later. Saudi Arabia continues to enjoy support as a country that now recognizes the *Al Qaeda* as a threat and is working to decimate it. Support for Israel and an endorsement of its right to defend itself against terrorist attacks is unchanged and the statement reiterates US resolve in helping Israel maintain an edge in defense technology against its adversaries.

Within the broader goal of winning the war on terror, the Republican platform identifies specific goals for its Asian allies, coalition partners and friends. In the Asia-Pacific, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines provide the alliance framework supported by friendly countries; Singapore, India, Indonesia, Taiwan and New Zealand. Key US interests in this region are to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean Peninsula. China and North Korea pose potential threats to achieving these objectives. The Republicans platform clearly states that the US will tolerate no aggression from China or North Korea against their neighbours. While agreeing that America’s relationship with China is a crucial to maintaining peace and stability in the region, the statement is critical of the Chinese quest for advanced weapons and technologies. There is also a strong statement in favor of greater political democratization in China. While appreciating China’s cooperative approach in the Six Party Talks on North Korea, there is disagreement on important issues like human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and Taiwan. The Republicans have reiterated the earlier statement made by President Bush that the US will stick by its commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act and will help Taiwan defend itself against an attack from China.

In South Asia, Pakistan has been identified as a country that has transformed itself from a supporter of a terrorist regime, the Taliban in Afghanistan, to become a close ally in the war on terror. The Republican Party claims the dismantling of the Pakistani scientist AQ Khan’s clandestine nuclear network as a major achievement in furthering the goal of non-proliferation. Commenting on the upswing in bilateral relations between India and the US, the Republicans see a strong mutual commitment to building a strategically stable Asia. Increasing trade with India is favorably commented upon with the hope that India will continue to further liberalize its economy.

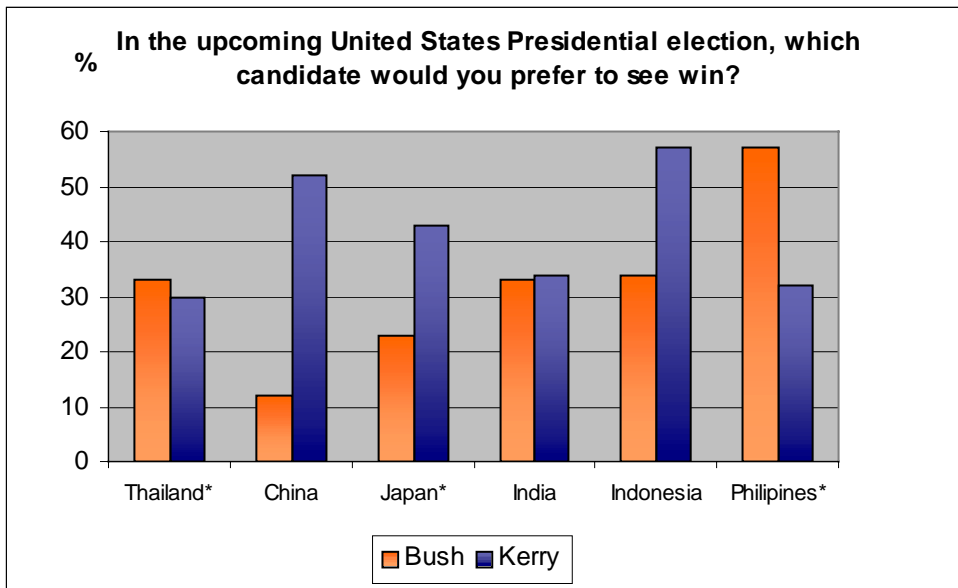
In sum, the Republican view of US interests in Asia and its attendant strategies to safeguard these interests are premised on nuclear non-proliferation, continued war on terror and active promotion of democracy in the Middle East. The major challenges to these strategies are likely to come, ironically enough, from allies such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that could be termed the birth-places of Islamic jihad, and where, the financial and logistical infrastructures that sustain the cause are still in place despite the ostensible efforts of the governments concerned to destroy

them. Moreover, these countries present a direct challenge to the Republican vision of democracy as outlined in the party's platform. The rebuilding of political institutions and the return of peace to Iraq will be the touchstone of the success of US policy in the Middle East. China, on the other hand, is likely to present the most serious strategic challenge to the US in retaining its present position and enforcing its will in the Asia-Pacific region. Increasing rivalry between Japan and China and the possibility of conflict over Taiwan will ensure continued, and possibly enhanced, US engagement in the Asia-Pacific.

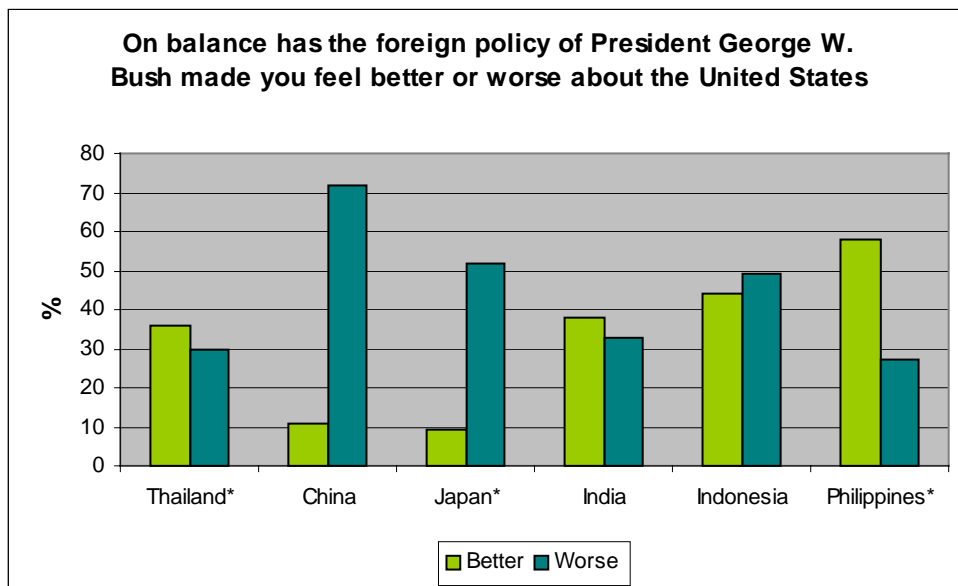
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### US Elections: The Asian View

In a recent survey, respondents were asked their views on the US Presidential elections and US foreign policy.



\*Countries with troops in Iraq



\*Countries with troops in Iraq

Survey conducted by the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies, University of Maryland in association with Globescan Ltd.

## **An American Dilemma: Pro-choice or Pro-life**

**By Stuti Banerjee**

The story of how a dedicated group of right wing leaders turned abortion into a household issue began in the 1960's, when after years of being on the sidelines the Republican conservative right gained control of the party machinery 'banishing the Republican moderates in to the outer darkness.' They realized a need to revamp their ideas to win the hearts and minds of the people that was ruled by the Democrats since the 'New Deal' of F.D. Roosevelt. This marks the beginning of the rise of the New Right, with its ultra-conservative views on economic, national security and social issues. During the 1970's the New Right was in a position to give to the Republicans the majority that they wanted and became a very viable political voting bloc. What is interesting is that this group was able to draw into its fold conservative Catholics from the Democratic Party as well. This they did by organizing conservative Catholics and Protestants who were concerned about certain 'single issues' such as abortion together to form what came to be known as single-issue constituencies.

Americans concern over abortion was highlighted through the '*Roe vs. Wade*' case (1973) when the Supreme Court declared a Texas law prohibiting an abortion, except for the purpose of saving a woman's life, unconstitutional. The court stated that the state could (only) regulate or even prohibit abortion in the last three months of the pregnancy unless advised by the physician. Since then, the debate on abortion has become more public and focused. According to The Alan Guttmacher Institute (2002), 49% of pregnancies among American women are unintended; Almost half of these are terminated by abortion. 52% of US women obtaining abortion are younger than 25 years. 19% of these abortions are performed on teenagers. Thirty-two states have enforced a law whereby parental consent or notification is required for minors seeking abortion.

America is, and always has, been divided on the issue. Though a majority of Americans find abortion disturbing, they feel that at times it is necessary and thus, want it to remain legal. The debate has become a major issue in the 2004 election especially after the President signed the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, a Bill vetoed twice previously by President Clinton. The President is clearly pro-life and is opposed to abortion except in cases of rape, incest or to save the mother's life. He supports banning the use of taxpayers fund for abortions and wants to encourage adoption. His opponent, Sen. John Kerry, on the other hand supports the right of a woman to make a choice. He is opposed to the restrictions imposed by the present Administration on abortion including the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act. Expressing his views, the Democratic candidate John Kerry made it clear that the number of abortions carried out in the country has to be reduced considerably (1.31 million legal abortions were carried out in 2000) but at the same time it has to be safe and legal for all those who make that choice. This view has brought on him the ire of the Catholic Church with Catholic bishops going to the extent of denying Holy Communion to Kerry and others of his ilk on instructions from the Vatican. (See box below). But John Kerry has stood firm by his pro-choice stand all through his political career, saying; "we have a separation of church and state in the United States of America." He has also, time and again, quoted the only Catholic to ever have become President, John F. Kennedy who famously said, "I will be a President who happens to be Catholic, not a Catholic President." However, Kerry finally seemed to have wilted under the pressure when in a newspaper interview in July, he said "I oppose abortion, personally. I don't like abortion. I believe life does begin at

conception.” Such contradictory statements have given more grist to the Republican mill to continue to project Kerry as a candidate who lacks conviction and call him a “flip-flopper.”

Opponents of abortion claim that it is a dying movement and the American people have seen the damage that abortion brings with it. But pro-life groups like the Feminist Majority, the National Organization for Women and the NARAL Pro-Choice America along with Catholics for a Free Choice, a pro-choice group in Washington point out that the issue is not just about “abortion rights, its family planning, it’s the morning after pill for rape victims...it is the very right of the women to control their lives and to control their futures and to make decisions privately.” These groups are apprehensive that the Bush Administration, if it came back to the White House, would take further steps to weaken reproductive rights. They point to the fact that one of the first acts of the present Administration right after it came to power was to reinstate a so called gag rule preventing international family planning workers supported by US funds from counseling or advocating for abortion rights.

The debate around abortion and the reproductive rights of women will continue beyond the elections; for the pro-choice groups it is the justice, safety, and the rights of the women at stake; for the pro-life advocates, it is the justice, rights and the life of the foetus at stake. While George W. Bush has made clear which side he’s on, John Kerry is trying to walk a fine line.

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**Memo by Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the Catholic Bishops Conference of America on “Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion”**

2. The Church teaches that abortion or euthanasia is a grave sin.

4. Apart from an individual’s judgement about his worthiness to present himself to receive the Holy Eucharist, the minister of Holy Communion may find himself in the situation where he must refuse to distribute Holy Communion to someone, such as in cases of a declared excommunication, a declared interdict, or an obstinate persistence in manifest grave sin.

5. Regarding the grave sin of abortion or euthanasia, when a person’s formal cooperation becomes manifest (**understood, in the case of a Catholic politician, as his consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws**), his Pastor should meet with him, instructing him about the Church’s teaching, informing him that he is not to present himself for Holy Communion until he brings to an end the objective situation of sin, and warning him that he will otherwise be denied the Eucharist.

6. When “these precautionary measures have not had their effect or in which they were not possible,” and the person in question, with obstinate persistence, still presents himself to receive the Holy Eucharist, “the minister of Holy Communion must refuse to distribute it” (cf. Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts Declaration “Holy Communion and Divorced, Civilly Remarried Catholics” [2002], nos. 3-4). This decision, properly speaking, is not a sanction or a penalty. Nor is the minister of Holy Communion passing judgement on the person’s subjective guilt, but rather is reacting to the person’s public unworthiness to receive Holy Communion due to an objective situation of sin.

[N.B. **A Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil, and so unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion, if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate’s permissive stand on abortion and/or euthanasia.** When a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favour of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons.]

\*This memo was leaked to the Italian press and, according to the *Guardian* newspaper of London, “**some passages appear to have been drafted specifically with Senator Kerry in mind.**”

## **Dalip Singh Saund: Master of the Game**

By Cherian Samuel



**Dalip Singh Saund** holds his due place in American history as the very first Indian American, and indeed Asian American to be elected to Congress, way back in the year 1956. His feat is all the more commendable when one considers the fact that though 33 Asian Americans have followed suit over the years, their ranks do not include any Indian Americans. This despite the fact, that they do not face even a fraction of the hurdles he faced in his journey to Capitol Hill.

In the first instance, Saund had to face institutionalized prejudices and barriers right from the time he set foot on American soil. Though he earned three degrees including a Doctorate in Mathematics, he couldn't find a job in academics and switched over to farming lettuce in California's Imperial County where many of the 7,000 odd Indians in the United States had settled down. However, he was barred from owning the land he farmed on, neither could he vote in elections since he was barred from becoming a citizen by virtue of being an Indian. The strongly anti-immigrant laws in force at the time meant that even his American wife lost her citizenship upon marrying him.

**Saund** remained undaunted despite these obstacles. He became active in not only the activities of the local Indian religious and ethnic organizations but also in the local wing of the Democratic Party. He first mobilized his countrymen under the banner of the Indian Association of America and vigorously lobbied Congress to make Indian Americans eligible for citizenship, a goal that was finally achieved with the passing of the Luce-Cellar Act in 1946.

At the same time, he had also been active in the mainstream community, joining community based organizations such as the Current Events Club, the charity organization "March for Dimes" and the Toastmasters Club, a forum to practice public speaking. According to anecdotal accounts from that early period, he used to declare that he would be the first "Hindu Congressman in the United States." Despite, or because of his high profile in the community, he continued to face hostility and prejudice; so much so that he had to relocate to Los Angeles in 1942, since his children were refused admission in the local school because they were "half-breeds."

Upon gaining citizenship, Saund ran for the post of Judge in the local county, a position he held for five years subsequently, till he decided to run for Congress. In that time, he had become chairman of his county's Democratic Central Committee. His decision to run for Congress could also have been motivated by the fact that, even though it was a Republican stronghold, the seat was an "open" seat since the incumbent had decided to retire. His opponents, both in the Democratic primaries, as well as in the General elections, harped on the issue of his being a foreigner, but when the votes were finally counted, Saund had won by a majority of 3,300 votes. He was re-elected thrice and served Congress till he suffered a devastating stroke in 1962.

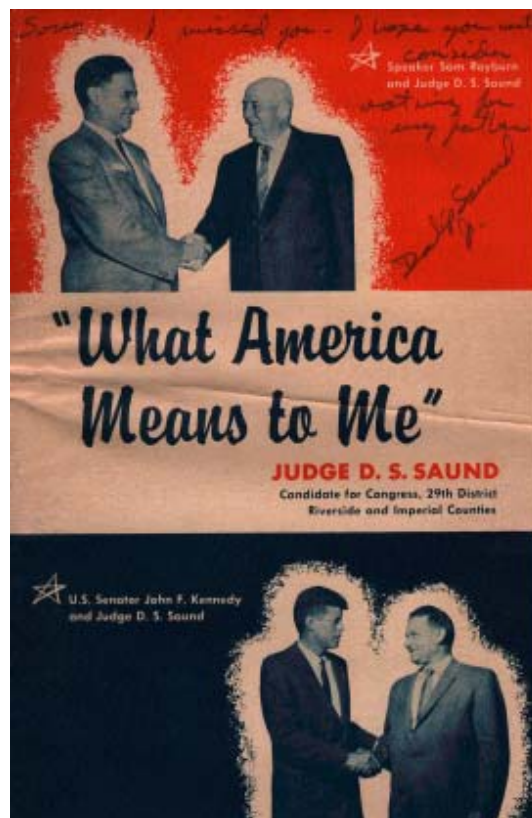
**Dalip Singh Saund** faced many of the dilemmas faced even today by Indian Americans who stand for office. Some of the decisions he took and the way in which he set his goals and then achieved them with single-minded dedication of purpose could certainly serve as a lodestar for all those who have strived to follow in his

footsteps. While he was never ashamed of his ethnic back-ground, and in fact, using it to stand out from the crowd, once he decided to pitch in his lot with his adopted country, he made sure that there arose no occasion for anyone to accuse him of conflicting loyalties. (He however did go to the extreme of visiting India only once after moving to the United States, and that too, only when he was sent as the official representative of the US Congress on an Asian tour.)

He also made sure that he had set down sufficient roots in the local community before aspiring for the national stage. Only by doing that could he understand the issues close to the heart of the local community and give them sufficient confidence to elect him in the knowledge that he would effectively espouse their causes in the representative body. And the two tools of American democracy that he utilized most effectively were lobbying and grass-roots campaigning.

Dalip Singh Saund showed that if one had sufficient faith in oneself, and in the democratic system, then anything was possible. As he put it in the preface to his autobiography, *Congressman from India*, "I find comfort in the Declaration of Independence and hope for mankind in the great inalienable truths expressed in the Bill of Rights."

Permission to use media granted by Eric Saund



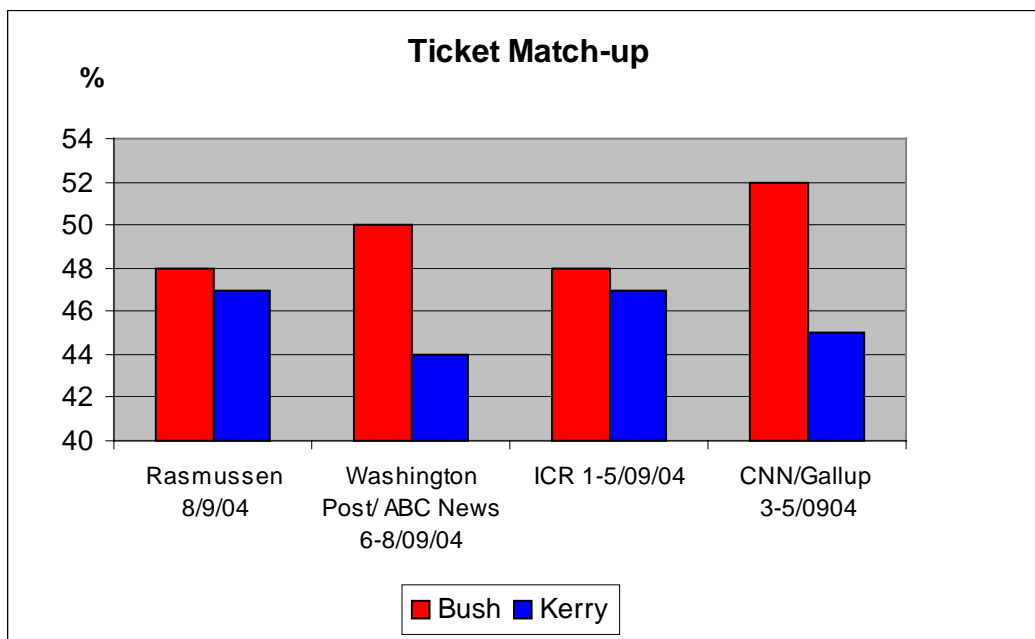
A campaign poster showing Saund with JFK

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## Poll Analysis: The Battlelines get sharper

The Labor Day weekend has kicked off the final sprint to Election Day and both sides are battle ready for the race that now tightens after several polls have shown that the ‘bounce’ is back with the Bush campaign after the national convention. To get the young voters the President is turning ‘hip & happening’. His new campaign videos have been inspired by the MTV style of music videos. The design is such that it will grab the attention of the 20 something voters. The work is all part of a campaign to “get out the vote”.

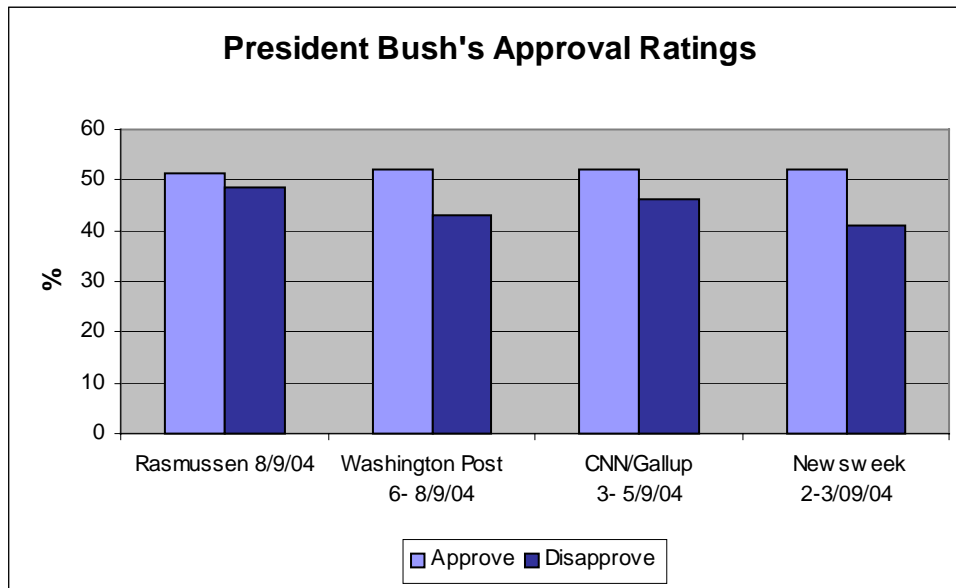
And yet according to pollsters, voters are still deciding whether to vote in the November elections or not. Most of the voters especially, the swing voters, point out that the two candidates have spent an enormous amount of time trying to tell them about the ‘War on Terror, 9/11 and Iraq.’ While they understand the importance of these issues but what they see around them are lost jobs, closing health care facilities and lack of fund for educational institutions. They want the candidates to start talking care of issues that are much closer home and affects them more than Iraq. And as the campaign enters its last phase they find that these issues, at best, have been paid lip service.



Good jobs have become scarce and while jobs are being created the old industries are shutting down. Thus the end result is new business is moving in where the old business was operating and this new business is not providing the job security of the old. To most it appears that their loss is much larger than the gain.

These swing voters are not swinging between candidates but between voting and not voting. Though most agree that Bush has been able to outline a program for the domestic constituency if he were to come to power for the next four years what they want from him is a promise to take action on these issues. They feel, that, Kerry, on the other hand, has been completely non-committal. He has skimmed through issues without going into them in-depth. And one can clearly see this in the Washington Post/ABC News poll where 47% of the people polled trusted Bush to handle both the economy and the situation in Iraq (53%) better than Kerry (43% and 37%

respectively). But that is about as much good news as President Bush is getting. The acceptance speeches of both the candidates have not gone well with these voters who feel that it was a performance put up for the benefit of those voters who were happy to listen to the candidates say some things that they want to hear.



According to a study conducted by Washington Post over a period of the two conventions with a sample of ten swing voters, the finding was that what these uncommitted voters want is a candidate who will be the combination of the Republican strength in facing the enemy abroad and the Democratic commitment to solving the problems at home. They want action from the President of the United States of America. They want him to take care of them first.

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**Readers Comments:** ORF would like to thank the recipients of the US Election Monitor for the number of encouraging responses that they have sent to the past fourteen issues. We value our readers and their opinions and we invite them to write in on issues and arguments, carried in the Monitor, or simply send us their comments.

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We appreciate your support and your patience in our endeavours.