

Jeffrey Sachs

Reith Lectures 2007: Bursting at the Seams

Lecture 3: The Great Convergence

Recorded at Columbia University, New York

SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to New York for the third in this series of Reith Lectures. We are at the Earth Institute at Columbia University, whose Director is this year's Reith lecturer, Jeffrey Sachs. The Earth Institute was set up to analyse, investigate, and most importantly, try to find solutions to the environmental and economic problems facing the world today. In his first lecture, Professor Sachs set out his argument that through international co-operation, the world can rid itself of disease, poverty and pollution. Last week in China he explained the role that it, the world's most rapidly developing economy, needs to play in this process. Tonight, on his home territory, he'll talk about the United States, a country at the zenith of its economic power, facing colossal changes as the emerging nations of Asia seek to take their turn on the world stage. What must America do? How should it behave? Here to discuss these questions is an audience of politicians, academics, students, and, if there is such a thing, ordinary New Yorkers. But first ladies and gentlemen please will you welcome the BBC's Reith lecturer 2007, Jeffrey Sachs. Our generation's challenge is of a planet bursting at the seams. There are 6.6 billion of us crowded on the planet today, and the numbers continue to rise. The UN has recently estimated that we will total 9.2 billion by 2050 if we maintain our current demographic trajectory. Unprecedented economic growth in Asia offers the vista of a richer world, indeed of shared prosperity around the planet. The end of extreme poverty is within reach. But unless we come to grips with the dangerous aspects of our technological prowess and demographic trends, we might instead face the prospect of an ecologically wrecked planet, one gripped by man-made climate change, the massive human-led extinction of other species, and the grave insecurity of a planet divided as never before between the extreme rich and the extreme poor. The hopes of shared prosperity could instead become a nightmare of shared insecurity.

(APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: I believe that we can find our way through this thicket, that we can solve even the toughest of these problems. Practical answers to the challenges of climate change, the conservation of biological diversity, extreme poverty, emerging epidemic diseases, and food insecurity are all within reach. President John F. Kennedy summed up this potential when he declared that

'Our problems are manmade - therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable - and we believe they can do it again.'

And of course Kennedy was right. We stand today on the 200th anniversary of the end of the slave trade in the British Empire, a step towards human freedom that was won

through an unrelenting campaign of social activists over entrenched economic interests. We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the independence of India, the 50th anniversary of the birth of independent Ghana, the first independent country in post-Colonial Africa. And of course we are at the 50th anniversary of the European Community, now the European Union. After a millennium of warfare in Western Europe, the very thought of conflict among Germany, France, the U.K., Italy and others is utterly unthinkable. As Kennedy said,

'However fixed our likes and dislikes may seem, the tide of time and events will often bring surprising changes in the relations between nations and neighbours. '

In these lectures I have been laying out my view of how we can best address global problems. The starting point, I believe, is a sound and scientific diagnosis of the problems we face, whether of climate, biodiversity, water, or extreme poverty. Next is public awareness. We live, fortunately, in an increasingly democratic age. Global problems can only be solved with global public understanding.

Next is the deployment of technologies to address the challenge. Though advanced technologies are sometimes considered to be a malign force, yet a further threat, they are of fundamental importance in enabling 6.6 billion people, and perhaps 9.2 billion people, to meet the twin aspirations of improved material life and ecological sustainability. Without improved technologies to raise food productivity, to use water more efficiently, to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide per unit of energy, there can be no way to combine economic wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Finally, there must come global agreement, implementing treaties such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and of course the Millennium Development Goals.

Ironically, to many of us on this planet, the first three steps - science, public awareness, and technological solutions - all seem within reach, while global agreements on how to respond seem impossible. The deepest skepticism, it seems, is about our very ability to cooperate, not about the technical solutions to our most challenging problems. Yet, to quote Kennedy once again, the belief that global cooperation is beyond our capacity is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable - that mankind is doomed - that we are gripped by forces we cannot control.

When Kennedy spoke, large numbers of Americans thought that peace with the Soviet Union was impossible. They were wrong. So too are those today who believe that we can not agree to end poverty, fight climate change, and even to make peace in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Yet global cooperation is in fact difficult. It is a challenge that we have only sporadically achieved. We meet today at a time of another disastrous war, that is, another clear failure of global cooperation. The Iraq War not only kills by the tens of thousands, and maims by even more, but it distracts us from our much more vital tasks.

Global cooperation is at risk for three reasons. The most urgent is the ever-present threat and reality of war, born of the darker side of human nature. A second reason why cooperation fails is that in our interconnected world, the collapse of any single part of the world - even a place as isolated as Afghanistan - has implications for all of the world. Cooperation in an inter-connected world must therefore be comprehensive, something that our societies still do not appreciate or accept. We must care, and also act, in response to suffering in Sudan, or Yemen, or Gaza, or Papua New Guinea. A third reason for failure is sheer complexity. Our problems are now of global scale. The world is interconnected in unprecedented ways that require unprecedented strategies for global cooperation. Tonight I will focus on the first of these risks - the threat of war - leaving the challenges of failed and fragile states, and of global complexity, for later lectures.

Our gravest threat on the planet remains the threat of massive war. Our species is drawn to it like moths to a flame. We are not warlike by nature - that is far too simplistic - but we are vulnerable to the allure of war to solve problems. Half a trillion dollars later in Iraq, you might think that we would have been disabused. Yet even our home town press, the New York Times, recently (March 18, 2007) editorialized for a boost in the size of the standing army. This, indeed, would be a recipe doomed to fail. The military will not solve the problems that we face. Our money, training, and effort, can be much better invested elsewhere.

My worry is that we are gambling recklessly with a "2014" to match the year 1914. Let me explain. Nearly one hundred years ago, in 1914, the peace was sundered by the Guns of August, and the 20th century never quite recovered. World War I almost literally came out of nowhere, so much so that historians still debate why the war occurred. A happy march of soldiers to win each nation's honor within a few weeks turned into four years of mass carnage, the Bolshevik Revolution, the rise of Hitler, the Holocaust, and more. Our war in Iraq, our threats to Iran, and even the growing anti-Chinese sentiments in the well of the US Senate all raise the stakes of a similar disaster on our generation's watch.

We are not doomed to this outcome, but we can become the accomplices to it. Two deep aspects of human psychology are crucial here. The first is that human beings hover between cooperation and conflict. We are actually primed psychologically, and probably genetically, to cooperate, but only conditionally so. In a situation of low fear, each of us is prone to cooperate and to share -- even with a stranger. Yet when that trust evaporates, each of us is primed to revert to conflict, lest we are bettered by the other. Game theorists call this strategy "Tit for Tat," according to which we cooperate at the outset, but retaliate when cooperation breaks down. The risk, obviously, is an accident, in which cooperation collapses, and both sides get caught in a trap in which conflict becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In that all-too-real nightmare, we end up fighting because we fear that the other will fight. This fear is confirmed by fear itself. Wars occur despite the absence of any deeper causes.

The second crucial piece of human psychology is that we are social animals, with a strong tendency to identify with an in-group. We classify ourselves as New Yorkers, or Americans, or Jews, or Muslims, or professors, or artists, or bankers. In most cases, we are a part of many groups. Our identities are multi-faceted, and that knits us together in overlapping webs of trust and shared regard. Yet in an environment of

fear, a single in-group, a single "us" can suddenly take over. The world becomes divided between "us" and "them." Suddenly, we are Jews and Arabs, Christians and Muslims, Hutus and Tutsi, Shiites and Sunnis. Peaceful coexistence over centuries becomes carnage over weeks and months. Psychologists have shown that a child's attachment to an in-group begins as early as age 6, and that fear of an out-group, especially a low-status outgroup, is manifested at that young age, and even at the unconscious level.

Put these two pieces - Tit-for-Tat strategy and "us versus them" logic -- together and we can see how the world confronts alternative futures. One possible future is a world in which trust builds trust, cooperation begets cooperation. Our identities are multiple. I may be a New Yorker, working at Columbia University, in partnership with my colleagues in Egypt and Jordan, to address problems of water and climate in the Middle East. That kind of multi-faceted identity is the road to peace, to a mid-century of prosperity, to an anniversary of 1914 that notes human folly and tragedy rather than human fate.

The other future, however, puts us into a world of spiralling conflict. Box cutters and hijacked planes bring death and disaster in New York City. We "retaliate" though in Iraq, which was not party to the attack, and thereby spread the conflict. We lump together a terrorist group, al-Qaeda, with states such as Libya, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran, failing to recognize that states are much more complex and with varied interests that can be the subject of negotiation. Cooperation collapses. It's suddenly "us" versus "them." 2014 is no longer an anniversary, but our own seeming death wish. And in the meantime, while the fighting and insecurity escalates, we utterly neglect the problems of climate change, biodiversity conservation, extreme poverty, and the very goals that we have set ourselves for the new millennium. How true are John Kennedy's words of June 1963:

For we are both devoting to weapons massive sums of money that could be better devoted to combating ignorance, poverty and disease. We are both caught up in a vicious and dangerous cycle in which suspicion on one side breeds suspicion on the other, and new weapons beget counter-weapons.

In President Bush's 2008 budget just submitted, military spending is \$623 billion, more than all of the rest of the world combined, while aid to all of Africa is \$4.5 billion. Inexplicably, Vice President Cheney accused the Chinese of a build-up of their military budget, though their military outlays are vastly lower than ours.

How then to break this dangerous cycle, one as threatening today as it was during the Cold War, and that is now marked by the grave perils of inter-religious hate and zealotry, a wider spread of nuclear weapons, and stronger global interconnections that amplify a conflict to all corners of the world? Again, we must take Kennedy's greatest insight, that "Peace is a process - a way of solving problems." Let's see how Kennedy applied that profound insight in his day, and learn to do it in ours.

Kennedy's speech on June 10, 1963, which I have quoted throughout this evening and throughout the Reith Lectures, was not only a scintillating exposition on peace, and not only a challenge to his generation to make peace, but was also part of the process itself, a way of problem solving. Kennedy literally used the speech to make peace.

Kennedy's chosen process was ingenious. The entire speech is to his fellow Americans, not to the Soviet Union. He didn't tell the Soviets that they were either with us or against us. He didn't lay down preconditions for negotiations. He didn't make a list of things that the Soviets must do. There were no threats of sanctions. In fact, the opposite was true. The entire speech was about US behaviour and US attitudes. Instead of lecturing the Soviets, Kennedy said:

'I also believe that we must re-examine our own attitude - as individuals and as a nation - for our attitude is as essential as theirs.' We should, he said, "begin by looking inward," to "the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war and toward freedom and peace here at home.'

Brilliantly, Kennedy, then spoke about our own actions as well as our own attitudes. He said:

'We must conduct our affairs in such a way that it becomes in the Communists' interest to agree on a genuine peace. Above all, while defending our vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy - or of a collective death-wish for the world.'

History records the results. Khrushchev immediately declared to Averell Harriman, the U.S. diplomatic envoy, that the speech was "the best statement made by any president since Roosevelt," and declared his intention to negotiate a treaty. So successful was Kennedy and his team, led by speechwriter Ted Sorensen, who is with us this evening, that the speech itself was followed in a mere six weeks by a Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union, initialled on July 25, 1963. That Test Ban Treaty, history shows, was the turning point of the Cold War, the first step down from the threat of imminent mutual destruction that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a step that put the world on the path of arms control, then détente, Perestroika, and the end of the Cold War itself. Cooperation had begotten cooperation, in the shadow of the near-Armageddon in Cuba.

Threats of self-fulfilling conflict will rise in the years ahead. Many Americans and Europeans, though still protected by the dominant military forces on the planet, will be afraid, and increasingly so. They will fear the rise of China's economic, political and military power, the rise of India, the changing demographics of the Middle East and of our own societies. The US will not be "the world's sole superpower," and perhaps never really was. We can't even secure Baghdad, much less the world. And we will likely be eclipsed in total economic size by China within a generation, though not in per capita income. Western Europe's population, which was nearly four times that of the Middle East plus North Africa in 1950, is now only one-third larger, and will be at parity by 2025. By mid-century, the population of the Middle East and North Africa will be around one-third larger than Europe's population. In the meantime, the Muslim population in Europe will also soar, perhaps to around one-third in the major cities, both because of in-migration and because of higher fertility rates of European Muslims compared with European Christians.

This will all be cause for alarm in many quarters and we already see it in the rise of anti-immigrant politics today. Yet we must not let our anxieties run ahead of us, and thereby lose control of our future. Fear begets fear, but so too can trust beget trust. It's all in the process. I speak tonight in a city that is an exemplar of what globalization can offer. New York City is about 40 percent foreign born. It is a unique amalgam of civilizations. Manhattan is a quarter Hispanic, 15 percent African American, 10 percent Asian, and half white, non-Hispanic. It is a forerunner of the demographics of the U.S. as a whole by mid-century, when the white, non-Hispanic population will be a mere 50 percent, down from 70 percent today. London, in the same way, is a forerunner of Europe's changing demography. Yet New York and London are not cities in disarray, but just the opposite. They are arguably the two quintessential World Cities at the start of the 21st Century. They are both hugely prosperous, hugely safe, and hugely diverse.

I was in London during the subway bombings in July 2005. What impressed me above all else was the calm appeal by all U.K. leaders for mutual respect and for attention to the shared fate of the country's various ethnic communities, Christian and Muslim alike. This maturity reflected the traditions and wisdom of hundreds of years of open society, tolerance, and democratic self rule. This attitude is the way to peace. And the U.K. as well as the U.S. will be safer still the sooner all of our troops, American and British, are out of Iraq.

Continued immigration, across cultural and economic divides, is not only inevitable but also broadly beneficial. Immigrants deepen the ties that hold our world together. Today's migrants don't abandon their homelands, but bridge their homelands with their adopted countries. They make links, economic, cultural, and social. Immigration needs to be steady and sure, neither a floodgate nor a trickle. A floodgate would disrupt the long-term processes of social trust and institution building in the host and source countries. A trickle would allow a build-up of global pressures and illegal population movements to an intolerable degree.

Of course, we would be wise to ease such pressures a bit by helping the poorest countries to achieve a voluntary reduction of the high fertility rates in places where population growth is still extraordinarily high. There is no question that the demographic bulge in the today's impoverished countries, including the poorest regions of Africa and the Middle East, adds to tensions but also undermines economic development and wellbeing in those countries. In some of the poorest regions, fertility rates are still so high that populations are doubling every generation. This adds to poverty, youth unemployment, despair, violence among young people, and mass migration as well. Scientific evidence shows squarely that even the poor would like to have fewer children, and will chose to do so, when they can gain access to family planning and contraception, and when they are confident that their children will survive, get an education, and have the chance to participate as productive members of the global society. Once again, though the Bush Administration speaks of fighting terror and instability, it undermines those very goals by slashing public spending on programs of voluntary fertility reduction in the world's poorest countries.

In summary, if we proceed with wisdom, our global generation can cooperate. It is, most likely, in our very genes. We must see peace as a process. We must understand too the fragility of peace, and how war can escalate. We have much too much these

days of threats, sanctions, and pre-emptive strikes, and far too little of examining our own attitudes as Kennedy bade us to do. It's time for a process of building trust, with Iran, with Palestine, with Africa, and with our own poor. Each of us needs to reach out, in our multiple identities, to make connections to other parts of the world. As a social scientist and policy analyst, it is my great joy and pleasure to work with colleagues in Egypt, Ethiopia, Malaysia, India, China, and Iran. The miracles of video conferencing allow me to give lectures and to exchange views with Iranian, Palestinian, Malaysian, and Chinese students.

We need to end pre-conditions to talk. We need to end the prevailing confusion that claims that negotiating with an adversary is the same as appeasing that adversary. The true lesson of the 1938 Munich Agreement, when British Prime Minister Chamberlain acceded to Hitler's assault on Czechoslovakia, is not to end future negotiations with adversaries, but to reject concessions that cripple one's security. We will find that dialogue may well open vast vistas of cooperation. Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and other countries truly need to find solutions for energy, water supplies, food production, and adaptation to climate change. We can help, and we should do so. And by converting some of our bloated military budget into practical efforts to fight malaria, AIDS, climate change, unsafe water, and unwanted fertility, we would even more strengthen the bonds of cooperation. Let us take at least \$70 billion of the \$623 billion military budget and program it as practical help to the poorest countries. And let's save another \$100 billion per year by ending the Iraq War itself.

I return, once again, to John Kennedy's deepest insight, the one that he gained and shared with the world after peering into the nuclear abyss in October 1962. This insight explains why we can cooperate, and why we will. As he said:

'For in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.'

Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Jeffrey Sachs, thank you very much indeed. Now it's for our audience here at Columbia University in New York to explore and challenge those propositions, as they apply most particularly to the United States. So let's begin then, and I'm going to go first of all to Harvey Molotch, who is Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University. Professor?

PROF. HARVEY MOLOTCH: You've told us about John Kennedy, and you've told us about our genes. What is it about American traditions and the deeper currents of those traditions that you can identify that will lead to this kind of self-examination, openness to the rest of the world as well as to the country itself? How do you spot those and what do you think they are?

JEFFREY SACHS: One thing I think we can say about the American people is that they are pragmatic. We see that while Americans largely supported the Iraq war, as patently misguided as it was, before the war ever commenced, Americans now see it doesn't work. And I think that pragmatism is certainly our best hope. Our country has produced great leaders in an open society that is still very open, and we've produced

leaders who spoke of charity for all, and malice towards none, and who said that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself, and who told us to look inward to make peace with our enemy. So we've produced such great leadership in the past. We need it today. That will help.

SUE LAWLEY: Professor Molotch, do you want to come back?

PROF. HARVEY MOLOTCH: Yes. Given that the ease with which things can go so off-kilter, it makes me uncomfortable to think that it depends on particular leaders coming along at particular times. And so what can we fall back on in terms of either our heritage or the institutional structure of the country that would imply that we're going to get through this kind of impasse and create such a different mode of thinking about ourselves?

JEFFREY SACHS: We learned after September 11 how incredibly fragile our institutions are. We learned how they can be hi-jacked by fear and by misguided leadership. We did not see the bulwark of our institutions holding up. If the Iraq war had been a rousing success we would have been on to more wars in the region, I have little doubt about it. That was the game plan. What can we do about it beyond hope? We can talk to each other, do what we're doing now, alert each other that we are not past the risk right now. We still face real risks of self-fulfilling danger, because we are still with a mindset that is prone to a vulgarism of us versus them, a readiness to attack and bomb people whose names we can't name, whose places we don't know and couldn't even locate on a map.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to call in Jason Weingartner here. He's Chairman of the Young Republicans in New York State. I think we need to hear this voice.

JEFFREY SACHS: We probably don't fully agree.

(LAUGHTER)

JASON WEINGARTNER: What, we're pre-judging already? (LAUGHTER) Well America has great democratic institutions, and a proud history of, especially after World War Two, of domestic protection and promotion of those democratic institutions - the Civil Rights Movement, the Civil Rights Act - and internationally after the Cold War with our promotion of democracy abroad. Aren't you underestimating the United States' record in that regard?

JEFFREY SACHS: We do believe in the expansion of democracy, and I believe that there are also very deep reasons in the world why that's happening. I just don't believe that you bring that about by bombs. And when you do have a democratic election, like we've had in Palestine, I believe you talk with the government. So I think that if we're really serious about doing these things we should fulfill our side of the bargain in a more systematic way, which is to discuss with democratically elected governments, even when we don't like what they say.

SUE LAWLEY: People on the front row here itching to come back to you. Your point?

HAYLEY PANZER: Hello, my name's Hayley Panzer. How do you reconcile your feelings about the Iraq war with two major polls recently out which show that the majority of Iraqis feel their lives are better than they were under Saddam, and they do not wish the US to leave soon?

JEFFREY SACHS: Well you read different polls than I do.

HAYLEY PANZER: That's your answer?

JEFFREY SACHS: That's my answer.

HAYLEY PANZER: All right.

JEFFREY SACHS: It's, it's just not at all in accord with...

HAYLEY PANZER: One of them was 'USA Today'. I forget the other, I'm not sure ...

JEFFREY SACHS: There is such overwhelming unhappiness, and so many lost lives, so much destruction and so much danger that has arisen from this, that there is no way that I think that any of this can be justified. That's my answer.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to bring in Rick Brownell, who writes history books for high school children I'm told.

RICK BROWNELL: That's correct.

SUE LAWLEY: So your question?

RICK BROWNELL: Thank you. Professor, you were recently in China. It's a nation clearly on the rise on the world stage. To what extent should the United States be concerned about the rise of China, and what can we do diplomatically and economically to counterbalance them?

JEFFREY SACHS: I think the rise of China is a fundamental part of global history right now. History shows in the twentieth century that leading powers and rising powers don't have an easy time of it, and that's exactly the 1914 story, although the exact trigger of the war remains somewhat obscure. But it was clearly an arms race between a rising Germany and a naval leader, the British Empire, that stood as the fundamental fulcrum around which the alliances that finally triggered World War I were oriented. This could happen again. How China evolves will depend, just like John Kennedy says, on our own attitudes and our own form of behaviour. There is nothing fundamental about a conflictual relationship with China, but there is nothing that guarantees that we won't get trapped in one. It will depend heavily on how we behave ourselves, and our own attitudes.

SUE LAWLEY: Mr Brownell, do you want a quick comment on that?

RICK BROWNELL: Er yeah.

SUE LAWLEY: Do you buy that?

RICK BROWNELL: I tend to think...

SUE LAWLEY: A quick one, a quick one.

RICK BROWNELL: ...though that China does a little bit of pushing of its own, like the way it's treated Tibet, its policy regarding Taiwan, most recently the test firing of, shooting down a satellite. I mean these are clearly steps that they're deliberately making to say to the world we're here, and no offence but I think that they, you know, are actually acting in an imperialistic fashion.

SUE LAWLEY: There you go, but you get into your them and us, and we, we can't get into a debate about China specifically now. I'm going to move on, Jeffrey, if you don't mind. What about a comment from here?

ELIZA KRETZMANN: My name is Eliza Kretzmann and I'm a student here at Columbia University, and I also have a question related to the shift in international power, as this shift is expected to occur from the US to places like just China and India. The United Nations also predicts that over two million people will migrate to the US and Europe every year from now until 2050. My question is, if the East is going to be home to the new superpowers, why do you think so many people will continue to migrate west?

SUE LAWLEY: It is a contradiction.

JEFFREY SACHS: A lot of the migration is not coming from India and China, but it's coming from Africa, North Africa and the Middle East into Europe, and Latin America's our biggest source of migration in the United States. So there's a powerful economic force, because there's a very big economic gap still remaining between the US in technological and per capita terms. It's the same thing with Europe vis-a-vis the Middle East and Africa. The world is still highly unequal on income distribution, and those inequalities of per capita income and productivity will lead to persisting pressures on migration for quite a long time to come.

SUE LAWLEY: I'd like to get a few quick comments in from the floor. Can you make a quick comment, and I'll just take a couple.

DAVID UNGER: Right. David Unger from our home town newspaper...

JEFFREY SACHS: Yes.

DAVID UNGER: ...editorial page. (LAUGHTER) I don't want to be the, the voice of pessimism and doom here but I think in order to do what you outlined, which is certainly crucial to our wellbeing, we have to understand the magnitude of the task before us. And I think that we kid ourselves if we think we're just talking about the last six years. We've been through a lot of history, through Vietnam, through the Iran hostages, through 9/11, through the collapse of the Soviet empire, and it seems to have made us and our political system, our identity as a nation, somehow want to secede from accountability to the international community and the rules of other nations, whether it takes the form of an aggressive unilateralism, or a wounded self-

righteous retreat from the world after Vietnam or after Iraq. This seems to be what our political system resonates to.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff, I could ask you to address it as swiftly as you can?

JEFFREY SACHS: One thing that I find in the world right now, in speaking with dozens of world leaders, is a readiness to work on some of the hard challenges that I talked about - climate, water, population, extreme poverty. Indeed there's a certain measure of seriousness in countries in all parts of the world that is rather striking right now. It's fear in a way but fear grounded in a sense of the real dangers that are at a global scale. I believe that even reasonable leadership in this country will give an opportunity to reduce the fear tremendously. I do think September 11 was an extraordinary event, clearly without being banal about it. It opened up the possibilities for much worse than we could have imagined, much worse about us. It led to an end of introspection for several years, to bellicosity, to faith in the military approach, to the idea that we could bludgeon them all - after all we are the world's sole superpower. America has learned that that's a failure, but we have not yet gotten to the next stage, of understanding the nature of that failure.

SUE LAWLEY: Just here?

MATTHEW D'ANCONA: Matthew D'Ancona of 'The Spectator'. Professor, you spoke often and eloquently about leadership and choice and agency. You also quoted frequently from Kennedy's June 1963 address. Can I then adapt for a globalised and interconnected era an earlier speech of his, in January 1961, and say to you, 'Ask not what the world can do for you, ask what you can do for the world'. Is it not time that you cut out the middle man and ran for the presidency of the United States of America?

(LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: I have some of my neighbours here and I, they tell me I'm not sure I can carry 85th Street on the Upper West Side (LAUGHTER) so there's a little bit of a problem between your, your hopes and... (MATTHEW LAUGHS) So er...

SUE LAWLEY: So the Sachs for President bandwagon is not going to get under way.

JEFFREY SACHS: We haven't noticed the bandwagon, neither the band nor the wagon.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to take a question from the gentleman here.

MAN: ... this has been interfaith work and peace work around the world, and I share your, kind of this enlightenment, rational model, your language, reason and spirit, kind of universal shared values. The problem is that the world isn't behaving in a rational model of self-interest, in fact we're seeing people blow up their own environments instead of working in collaboration. What's the solution there?

JEFFREY SACHS: The issue here is not religious strife that is out of control and boiling over. It's controllable. It's a matter of politics, it's a matter of management, it's

a matter of understanding, it's a matter of institutions, it's a matter of how we behave. We have to see how there's another way. So these are processes, peace is a process.

SUE LAWLEY: We have, as you mentioned, during the course of your lecture, Jeff, we have Theodore Sorensen - Ted Sorensen - sitting on the front row there, lawyer and writer who was Special Advisor and speechwriter to President Kennedy. I wonder, having heard everything you've heard this evening, sir, whether you'd care to say something?

THEODORE SORENSEN: That's very nice, thank you. It's been an extraordinary experience for me to sit here tonight and listen to such a wise and wonderful lecture, with so many references to a speech given forty-three years ago, and I'm sure if President Kennedy were alive and here tonight he would be moved and touched as I am to think that that speech of his, that basic message of his forty-three years ago is now going out through these BBC lectures all over the world. Since I know a little bit about the speech that you frequently cited, I wonder why...

SUE LAWLEY: Can I just say, did you write it?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Oh I never acknowledge that. President Kennedy was the author of all of his speeches. (LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE) Or I, or what I should say in answer to that question is, 'Ask not'. (LAUGHTER) So my recommendation to you, Jeff, when you make this lecture again, is to cite two other parts of that speech. One is a passage where President Kennedy said, 'The world knows America will not start a war. This generation of Americans has seen enough of war.' Haven't heard that recently! The second was where he not only asked for a re-examination of our relations with the Soviet Union, but praised the Soviet people for the enormous contribution and sacrifice they made in World War Two, which no-one had ever done before, and the Soviets rather resented it, and it was one of the ways that he reached Khrushchev. Seems to me we live in a world where the people of Islam have been rejected and humiliated for generations, and if someone took the time to praise their contributions to civilisation over the centuries, that might help.

(APPLAUSE)

JEFFREY SACHS: Don't you think we have the makings of another speech coming? (LAUGHTER) I think it is so astounding that President Kennedy's and your speech was not only so brilliant that it gives shivers when you read it or listen to it, but it literally worked within weeks. It did exactly what it was meant to do: it changed history. This is an astounding, astounding truth, and it's an astounding accomplishment of, of this man before us tonight. It's just amazing.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Jeffrey Sachs, thank you very much indeed. Thank you to our hosts here at Columbia's Earth Institute. Next week we're at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, where Jeffrey will be addressing the fight against extreme poverty - those people who live on less than a dollar a day. That's Sachs at SOAS, next week. For now, from New York, goodbye.