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American Foreign Policy HIGHER EDUCATION'S ROLE

The next president of the United States will have the opportunity to reshape American foreign policy and restore American credibility and leadership. Representative Lee Hamilton outlined his vision of American foreign policy when he spoke to the Forum community last fall. Hamilton is currently president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. He served as a representative from Indiana in the U.S. Congress for 34 years and chaired the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, among several others. Hamilton more recently served as cochair, with James Baker, of the Iraq Study Group, which conducted a bipartisan assessment of the situation in Iraq. He served as vice-chair of the 9/11 Commission and is currently a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the President's Homeland Security Advisory Council, the FBI Director's Advisory Board, the CIA Director's Economic Intelligence Advisory Panel, and the Defense Secretary's National Security Study Group. Hamilton emphasized the importance of higher education's role in preparing citizens to address the challenges our nation faces worldwide. Excerpts of his remarks are reprinted here.

Fifty years ago, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik into space. And then the United States passed the National Defense Education Act. As a result, thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of young people began to learn Russian and to study Russian history and Russian culture, and the American higher education community responded in a magnificent way to the challenge of Sputnik and the challenge of the Soviet Union.

Iraq

Today, the absence of any mobilization in the wake of September 11 may very well be a national and

societal failure on a very large scale. And you do not have to look farther than Iraq to see that. There are 610 people deployed in Iraq today as part of the so-called Reconstruction Teams. Twenty-nine of them speak Arabic. The dearth of capable Arabic speakers in the United States embassy is simply astounding. I spent a week there. I don't know how many employees they've got, maybe a thousand. Ten speak Arabic. That demonstrates a nonchalance with which we have approached the challenges of that country and that region.

I do not accept the view that America has entered into some kind of state of permanent decline. Far from it. But it is true, I think, as you look around



the world, that America's preeminent position has diminished. Everybody sees us, of course, as a great power, but today one whose military limitations have been exposed by Iraq, whose economic strength has been challenged by China, whose exemplary model has been tarnished by some of our responses to 9/11. Our ability to mobilize the world as we did for the Marshall Plan during perhaps the greatest period of American diplomacy, right after World War II, has suffered a body blow, but not a fatal blow. If we do not lead, I think all of us would agree here, then more often than not progress is not made, because the world looks to us for leadership. Now, of course, this war has raised serious questions about our leadership.

I think there is a possibility, at least, that we can begin to develop a consensus on Iraq. One of the things that the Iraq Study Group noted is that the United States does not have a unity of purpose, a unity of effort, in Iraq. I know that American foreign policy is a lot better, stronger, if we're unified at home, but we have not been, and it is therefore, in my judgment, a failure of political leadership.

The question that dominates my thinking about all of Iraq is: How do we get out of this responsibly? I don't favor a hasty withdrawal. I know we've got important interests there. I know that Al Qaeda is there. But I don't know if you've noticed the difference between General Petraeus and the president on the enemy. General Petraeus spoke of a combination of sectarian groups competing for power through violence. I think he's got it exactly right. The president spoke of Iraq in a short speech he gave recently, and he mentioned Al Qaeda 12 times. The general had it right, in my view. General Petraeus spoke about stability as the objective. The president speaks about a functioning democracy and a free Iraq. Those aren't the same things. That's not the same objective.

U.S. Foreign Policy: Central Realities

The United States has many interests, of course, beyond Iraq. I think probably the toughest problem that's going to confront a future president is this question of when to intervene.

Between 1989 and the year 2001, we used significant force abroad eight times, about once every 18 months. So the fact of the matter is, we use military force a lot. I don't think that's going to change. When do you intervene? How do you intervene? Those questions, I think, are going to get tougher and tougher for us in this country. And I think that we have to begin to better understand the Middle East. We have to better understand Asia, which most experts think will be the most strategically important region in the world for the next 20 years. And I think institutions of higher learning have a major responsibility here. Because it's clear to me that when

we went into Iraq, we didn't understand the place. I'm not sure we understand it today.

I think it's important to try to get the big picture. In foreign policy, if you look around the world, there are several realities that stand out to me. The preeminence of American power, we'd all agree upon that. No matter what happens in Iraq, the United States is still going to emerge as the preeminent power in the world. The frustration, of course, is that with all of this power—economic power, military power, technological power, cultural power—we cannot bend the world to our will. But you cannot help but be impressed with American power.

I think we are witnessing, as another central reality, the shifting alignment of the great powers. The world order today is probably as fluid as it has been for decades. China, India, Russia, regional powers like Brazil, Indonesia are emerging. That's a central reality.

Another central reality is globalization. Maybe that's the megatrend in the world today. And I'm glad to see that debate shaping up now, because the problem with globalization, of course, is that it's never been global. Which is another way of saying there have been winners and losers. The world is not flat; you've got winners and losers. You've got peaks and valleys. And the big challenge is how you bring the losers up. That's the challenge for the United States.

Another central reality is the swelling turmoil in the world. Week after week after week, it's another area of the world in turmoil.

Integrating the Tools of American Power

The United States has to use its preeminent power to spread peace and prosperity, and the great powers have to resist the kinds of tensions that have produced great wars throughout our history. I've been thinking about the direction of American foreign policy. Maybe I'm naive, but I have now an expression of hope.

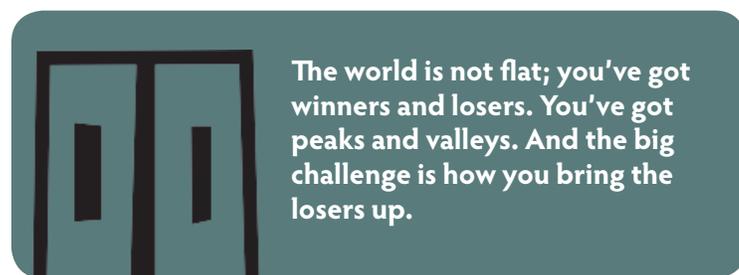
I hope we'll be less likely to divide up the world between good and evil, and instead recognize the variety of interests and motivations, the nuances and the shades. What about Saudi Arabia? Good or bad? Well, we can't get along without them. Every president I can remember says the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, is vital to American interests. And presidents don't use the word "vital" casually. Vital means vital. We have to have it. And if we don't, we're in trouble—not six months from now, we're in trouble tomorrow afternoon. Anybody here think Saudi Arabia's a democracy? Think King Abdullah's a democrat? Small "d" of course. It's a tough world. Good or bad, good or evil?

President Musharraf—an ally of ours in Pakistan, and in the war on terror. He's done a lot of helpful things for us.

Anybody call him a democrat? Why won't he let us go after Osama bin Laden?

The United States should have a deeper sense of the limits of what we can achieve alone in the world. What bothers you? Drugs? How are you going to solve that one without Colombia? Nuclear proliferation? How are you going to solve that by yourself? Climate change? Can't do that either. To solve any of these problems, we've got to have help. As smart as we are, as rich as we are, we've got to have some help. I hope we'll learn to better match our goals and our resources. Our ends and our means.

I understand presidents have to put out visions. But I also want to see a president adopt a major characteristic of the



American people, which is pragmatism. And I want to see us protect our own interests and use our resources wisely. I hope that we continue to have a very deep respect for all the American military has accomplished but that we will be very cautious about using it to solve all of our problems. If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

Military power is enormously important in resolving disputes—the use of it, or the threat of the use of it. But the real test, the real challenge for the American policy maker is to integrate all of the tools of American power. Not just the military, but economic and political and diplomatic, including public diplomacy and covert actions and intelligence and all the rest. You've got to integrate these things, you can't use just one. We're not going to get anywhere using military power alone. We're not going to get anywhere using diplomacy alone. We've got to integrate the tools of power, and it takes a lot of sophistication to do that.

I hope the United States will pay more attention to building a consensus here at home and a consensus abroad. I've already talked about that with regard to unity of effort in Iraq. It's also true internationally. We ought to be more concerned about this concept of legitimacy. I don't think Americans worry very much about it. I worry about it. How do you get legitimacy for an action? It doesn't bother most Americans. But believe you me, it bothers most of the rest of the world.

I hope we'll have a greater appreciation for the role of international institutions, and reassert the U.S. role as the leader of

the international community. I hope we'll turn increasingly to diplomacy to try to solve our problems. I reject the view that talking is a concession. If we get into trouble with a nation, often one of the first things we do is withdraw the ambassador. That's exactly the thing we ought not to do. We need the ambassador there when we have trouble. This idea of not talking to people you don't like doesn't make any sense to me at all, to be blunt about it. How do you solve problems in the world if you don't talk to people?

I hope we'll understand that making democracy the chief instrument for achieving our strategic goals in the Middle East is beyond our reach. You talk about democracy to Egyptian President Mubarak, as I have on a number of occasions, and that makes him very, very nervous. He doesn't want to hear you. And he's been an ally of the United States in many ways. We've got to get more realistic about these things, a little more pragmatic about what can be done.

I hope we'll put less emphasis on shaping other nations to fit our mold, and more emphasis on our own national interests and our own national security. I hope we'll recognize how hard it is to bring about a grand transformation in the world by promoting democracy in countries that have not known any. And I think the way to get at this problem of the radicalization of Islam is to say, in effect, look, your repressive governments are the cause of much of your misery. We can't change that for you. But we're on your side. We want for you the same kind of things we want for ourselves. We'd like you to have a decent education, we'd like you to have health care, we'd like you to be able to grow up and marry the person of your choice, and we'd like you to have a good retirement. We can't do those things for you, we have a hard enough time doing them for ourselves. But we share with you the desire for human dignity all over the world.

Think about how the United States is seen today. It doesn't seem possible, but polls show that many have a higher opinion of Osama bin Laden than they do the president of the United States. And we're supposed to be the great experts on public relations.

My hope is that in the future the United States will not hype threats. That we will not underestimate costs. That we will not paint unrealistic futures. That we will not savage those who disagree with us. And the task of the American policy maker is to apply our power pragmatically and skillfully, to restore our credibility, to fashion a sustainable foreign policy that will advance our interests. And so we have to set our objectives with more precision. We have to match our resources to meet our goals. And for goodness sakes, we have to learn how to manage and perform competently.



The future of this nation depends on citizens who are educated in the civic virtues. History and literature, philosophy and music, art and beauty and wonder help create citizens who can think and reason and make discriminating judgments.

Higher Education's Role

Where does higher education fit into all of this? The ultimate responsibility for dealing with these things that I've been talking about doesn't lie with me. It probably doesn't lie with you. But it does lie with the young people you deal with every day. And I think it's your responsibility, more than it is mine, to prepare them for the challenges they will face. I agree with what former Senator Claiborne Pell said: "The strength of the United States is not the gold at Fort Knox, or the weapons of mass destruction that we have, but the sum total of the education and the character of our people." And I worry about our ability to deal with these problems, whether this nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. That was the operative question Lincoln asked at Gettysburg; it's still the operative question today. These problems are coming at us with such complexity and with such rapidity. And we're going to have to have remarkably talented people to deal with them effectively.

I applaud so much that you do. At the Wilson Center we have a lot of young people come in as interns for short periods of time, and as I've chatted with them, I've been impressed by how many of them are taking courses in conflict prevention, and in mediation and negotiation. I never heard of those courses when I was in school. You're teaching them. And I just cannot help but think that as those young people come out of our universities, having taken these conflict prevention courses, and negotiation and mediation courses, that they're going to be better at solving problems than my generation has been.

I talked a moment ago about nation building. One of the things we haven't got right yet is how to engage in nation building. The military does its job. Then you hand over responsibility to the civilians, and that handoff hasn't gone very well. And the military is doing the best it can to deal with a lot of what are really civilian problems. Think a bit about the skills that are necessary in nation building: language, of course, agriculture, sanitation, public health, education, policing, civil society, the rule of law. How do you get the electricity running, and on

and on and on the problems go. We've got to have people to move into these areas and deal with these problems if we're going to be intervening time and time again in the future, if we're going to be engaged in the business of nation building.

Civic Virtue

It's critically important to imbue our students with a solid understanding of our own history and national character. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute reported that the average score on a civic literacy quiz was about 54%, appallingly low. I know from my work at the Center on Congress how little people understand about the role of the Congress in a representative democracy. Eighty percent of the voting-age young people know that the television family, the Simpsons, live in Springfield; 64% know the last American Idol winner. Fewer than 40% know which party controls the Congress. "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be," Jefferson said.

I hear a lot of talk from higher education leaders and others about the necessity of strengthening education in science and technology and engineering and math. I'm sure you're right, but I'd like to respectfully suggest that a well-rounded education requires more than technical skills. The future of this nation depends on citizens who are educated in the civic virtues. History and literature, philosophy and music, art and beauty and wonder help create citizens who can think and reason and make discriminating judgments. And that's what we need; citizens who are tolerant and exercise good judgment, who are civil, humble, honest, and want to try to solve the problem.

Conclusion

As we venture forth into uncertain times, and with horrendous challenges in front of us, we must reach out beyond our borders and engage the world. We must reflect on the historical legacy to which we are the heirs, and the legacy we wish to bequeath to our students and to students for generations to come. You, the cream of higher education in this country, you cannot, must not, abdicate your responsibility. The future is being shaped in your university classrooms every single day on your watch. I wish you well.

Representative Lee Hamilton is president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and director of The Center on Congress at Indiana University. He represented Indiana's 9th congressional district for 34 years, beginning in 1965. Hamilton's most recent book is *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission* (2006), co-authored with Thomas Kean.