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Oversight and Investigations

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Thank you for the opportunity to share some reflections on this subject with the  
Committee.

I am a historian. But I’ve also been a trial and appellate lawyer, and I’ve served in  
government in seven different federal agencies, a state agency, and as an elected  
member of a town school board.

We Americans have an extraordinary opportunity to reflect for a moment on the  
place we have at a precious moment in world history. I’m glad the committee is  
holding this series of hearings.

I have attached a forthcoming essay, appearing in a few weeks in a magazine called  
“The American Interest.” It lays out my views at greater length. In this testimony I  
will boil down some briefer observations, listing them so you can quickly and clearly  
see the structure of my argument.

1. Our country, governed with separated and overlapping powers, is most effective  
in the world when a common sense of purpose helps us concert our actions. Such a  
sense of purpose transcends party; it sets the framework within which the parties  
argue.

2. There have only been a handful of these “Big P” Policies in our history. One of the  
earliest was ‘no entangling alliances.’ The latest was ‘containment, plus deterrence.’  
We have not had such a large, common sense of purpose since the end of the Cold  
War. Since 1990, the United States has brought to a bewildered, confused,  
globalizing world a bewildering, confusing mélange of policy ideas. Politicians and  
officials talk about terror, democracy, proliferation, trade, the environment, growth,  
and dozens of other topics. They strike a hundred notes. But there is no melody.

3. There are already many arguments about how the United States should try to manage the post-Cold War world. They tend to take the current issue set as a given and focus on how to handle these issues better, smarter, stronger. More military, less military, more or better diplomacy, etc. I have worked on some of these proposals to improve our strategy on this or that issue, or reform this or that policy instrument, and would be glad to discuss these.

But I urge the Committee to dig more deeply into the core problem, which is a lack of clarity about the problem itself, lack of clarity about the character of this moment in world history.

4. The greatest challenge today, evident to ordinary people in the United States and around the world, is the tension between globalization and self-determination. *Globalization vs. self-determination.*

-- Globalization is familiar. Two points about it are not so familiar. One: globalization is unpopular. It is unpopular in the wealthiest countries that have benefited the most from it. Two: the current period of globalization has set vast manmade forces in motion, moving people, ideas, money, and goods on a scale and velocity, reshaping the natural life of the planet, beyond anything human beings have ever experienced or tried to manage.

-- Self-determination is familiar too. From Kosovars to Californians, physical and virtual communities are seeking to define and protect their special character and identity.

-- But the key point, sometimes overlooked, is that these two familiar phenomena -- globalization and self-determination -- are linked, like summer heat and thunderstorms. This has been true at least since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Communities buffeted by outside forces feel even more pressure to assert their own identity. A hundred years ago this took on a very dangerous form, as national imperialism, calls to the unity of race and soil, and revolutionary socialism all were reactions against the anonymous global forces that seemed to be transforming – threatening – the traditional lives of their communities.

-- We are going through such a phase again, most reminiscent of the time about a hundred years ago. It even includes the nihilistic transnational terrorists frightening all civilized people – but back then they called themselves anarchists, and they would throw bombs in opera houses instead of subway stations.

5. Globalization vs. self-determination is the combustion engine now driving debates here – and in China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, India, and Brazil. More and more, the

issues are transnational. In finance, energy, public health, crime control, immigration the domestic policies are also foreign policies.

Will countries trust that interdependence will work, that the global forces can be mastered to their benefit? Or will they start fortifying themselves in a hundred ways, listening avidly to the ideologues who will tell them why they have no other choice?

6. I believe a “big P” Policy for such a historical moment should rally the American people, across party lines, to help build an *open, civilized world*. This is not a slogan about process. It is about purpose.

- Globalization vs. self-determination is a problem my neighbors in Virginia can understand. It is not obscure.
- What they want to know is whether the major countries of the world can get together and make a promising start at managing all these enormous forces, show credibly that they can be managed.
- But they want those forces to be managed in a way that leaves plenty of scope for communities, including my town, to develop with an identity and values we can choose for ourselves and our children.
- So there must be a balance – show that international cooperation can work, that we are doing good, but that the framework is loose enough to allow self-determination to continue in its healthy form. Fail, and we open the door to a xenophobic, fearful world where everyone – and every nation – must first look out for themselves.

7. Though often and falsely set up as opposing schools of thought, notions of realism and idealism are bound together in any large Policy, as the genes of a father and mother are bound together in the chromosomes of their child. An *open, civilized world* implies values that can win broad popular support and policies that show credible effectiveness. Since the end of the Cold War, no proposed Policy has passed that test.

8. Albert Schweitzer wondered, in 1923, how the world could possibly restore some hope for civilization after the horrible carnage of the Great War. He began with the observation that “we have drifted out of the stream of civilization because there was amongst us no real reflection upon what civilization is.” Indeed, *only by putting the commitment to a “civilized” world at the center of its foreign policy can the United States foster such reflection.*

I think an “open, civilized world” implies five principles:

- *respect for the identities of others.* Grant people and communities the space they want and need to determine their identity, consistent with their civic duties to government and to each other.
- *cooperative prosperity.* The earlier era of globalization had very weak structures to sustain it in a storm. Powerful countries seized and closed off markets. Even the gold standard became an anachronistic anchor that did more to cause and deepen the Great Depression than it did to stop or slow it. Openness is preserved only by positive action.
- *mutual security.* The ghastly violence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century depended on large populations coming to believe that their security could only be achieved by destruction or conquest of others. Cooperative prosperity and mutual security are reciprocal principles.
- *stewardship of the planet.* This is no longer a left-wing anti-growth banality. Measuring human effects on the global environment across a number of major variables, scientists now believe that “more change occurred in the forty years from 1945 to 1985 than had occurred in the previous 10,000 years.” And this pace has accelerated in the last 20 years.
- *limited government.* We talk a lot about rule of law and democracy. But these are just two means to an end – how to limit the power of government, curbing tyranny and loosening the parasitic grip of statist rent-seeking and corruption. There are many ways to do this. In the American experiment, we long relied on separation of powers to achieve this result, overlapping and separated powers within the federal government and between the federal level and the states, long before the Bill of Rights ever had any effect on state laws at all.

9. With these principles in mind for an open, civilized world, we can conceive of a policy agenda that flows out of them, an agenda to reintroduce America to the world. Obviously we will be very concerned with ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a looming crisis in Iran. But the key to a large Policy is to develop an agenda that looks beyond the day’s headlines to the issues of a generation.

We could consider, for example, an agenda with five elements:

- *develop new frameworks for global capital and business.* The global economic agenda is dominated by the old concerns of trade and exchange among national entities. Instead we need global frameworks for global capital and investment, global regulatory environments for truly global firms that now face a patchwork of product safety standards, competition rules, intellectual

property rights, and the rest. Such frameworks will help businesses and consumers alike.

- *develop programs to protect global public order.* Terrorism is one facet of a wider problem of transnational criminal networks. We need better foundations for global efforts that will also help countries like Mexico, sliding into a strange kind of civil war right across our border. Even against Islamist terror, the United States needs to keep building a better moral and legal foundation for a coalition effort that keeps up the offensive pressure in gathering intelligence and handling captives.
- *improve international management of ultra-hazardous technologies that are increasingly available.* Nuclear technology is much discussed; think too about analogous issues such as biotechnology or nanotechnology. No one country can handle these issues alone. International management of nuclear material is also a great goal, envisioning the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, that can then strengthen our hand in the short-term – rallying support for firm action on a critical test case like Iran.
- *develop a global framework for local choices about how to reduce the world's dangerous reliance on oil and dirty coal.* Notice that here, again, the global framework cannot be ‘one size fits all.’ The global framework has no chance unless it is balanced with flexible incentives for local choices and local implementation, very much including countries like China and India. We are a long way from getting there. For example, the current Kyoto system of international offsets/carbon credits in climate change strategies is terribly insufficient.
- *fashion a program of inclusive, sustainable development for the fifty or so nations making up the “bottom billion.”* The issues of extreme poverty overlap with the issues for us: public order, food prices, scarcity of clean water, overdependence on oil and dirty coal.

This agenda takes economic issues seriously, fusing them with the great political issues in trying to understand the essential character of this moment in world history.

Agreement to seek an open, civilized world would gather Americans around an agenda animated by the most venerable American political tradition of them all: hope and confidence in the future.

Reintroducing America to the world, such an agenda could revive a sense of national purpose. It could reorient our government toward a broad view of the challenges of this new century. Thus our government, and other governments, can energize the languishing apparatus of international cooperation.

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