
Diplomacy: The Future

AMBASSADOR THOMAS R. PICKERING

This piece has been adapted from an address that Ambassador Pickering delivered at the September 9, 2004 Convocation of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Convocation traditionally marks the official start to the academic year; this time, it also celebrated the 50th reunion of the Class of 1954.

Dean Steven Bosworth, fellow members of the Class of 1954, and distinguished guests of this Convocation of the Fletcher School: it is a special pleasure for me to be here this evening. I want to thank Dean Steven Bosworth for his kind, generous, and thoughtful introduction. I am deeply grateful for it.

Someone once said that any good Methodist sermon should make three points. I want to talk about three things. I want to discuss what the world ahead looks like from the bunkered confines of an aging diplomat. I would like to consider the role that the profession of diplomacy can and should play in that world, and I would like to recommend changes in our policy approach to help meet some of these challenges.

What is out there ahead of us?

It is, most always, a blend of more of the same together with the addition of some predictable changes. In that regard, more of the same issues would be easiest to describe. Let me go ahead and do that, and then address some of the unpredictables.

To begin with, globalization will become ever more important. We will find ourselves working together in many different areas and arenas all around the world. I would highlight economic, commercial and trade issues, which, in the context of globalization, will play a much larger role in our international activities in the days ahead than they have in the past.

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We will each find ourselves more closely tied into these sectors than ever before. They will not dominate, but they will certainly provide the leaven and the grist for diplomatic interchange in the future more than they ever have. One example is that just as economic issues drive Europe closer together politically and strategically, so too will we see Europe's success as a result, helping to shape and mold similar efforts regionally and continentally elsewhere around the world.

Here, I would first point to the Association of South East Asian Nations, which continues to develop its relationships. Further afield, within Africa, developments from the African Union to the Southern African Area Regional Cooperation to Western African collaboration in the Economic Community of West African States show the shaping of a new cooperative spirit on the continent.

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States and with the region as a whole through the Free Trade Area of the Americas, mark some of the areas where imitation of European advances have helped to push ahead regional growth and consolidation.

In another aspect of the synergies that we see taking place, North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Agreements can and should constructively lead to success in the important universal trade negotiations in the Doha Round. In the U.S., our own country, we will inevitably be growing internationally. The realities of the single globe are driving us there.

Those who think that isolationism is the path for the future are almost gone from the scene. The "unilateralists" are their ideological stepchildren. They have now found, with rare exceptions, that when dealing with immediate and existential threats to our country, there is no formula for going it alone that can work successfully and over time for U.S. interests.

We are all on a single planet. States and regions still define a significant number of the challenges ahead, but increasingly these are being dealt with and resolved on a global basis. It is also true that we (the United States) are likely to remain, for many reasons, the world leader. Our size, strength, and the substance of our policies, as well as their scope, will continue to demonstrate that. But we need to lead, not to try to go it alone or to bludgeon the world to follow us.

Terror will continue to be with us in the future as a stratagem for achieving objectives. This could last for a long time—perhaps forever—and we will need to work to contain and to control terror wherever we can. Terrorism builds

and feeds on ideological and religious differences. It will continue to be nurtured by situations of disadvantage, turmoil and economic and social stagnation. In this regard, the continuing failure of nation—states, especially in Africa—despite its progress in other areas—is a worrying portent for the future.

So too is our growing exclusive focus on the close association between fundamentalism and Islam, on al-Qaeda and the prospect of future attacks on us and the West. It is not that the danger is not real; it certainly is. But the danger is also that without great care, we can turn the war on terror into a needless and mindless war on all of Islam.

Then there is the growth of states in strength and power as centers of political and strategic rivalry to the United States. Here, too, we remain alert and watchful. How we deal with these emerging world-class new states is particularly critical. We can act in ways that will confirm leaders in those states who wish to become rivals in their chosen course if we are not careful. Among those countries, as we have already seen, is China; possibly the European Union, as it comes together; and over time, India and Russia might well be candidates to rival the U.S. in the next two to five decades.

Finally, there is the emergence of many other critical issues for us to deal with.

Among them I would name health as extremely important. The destructive, disastrous triumvirate, HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria—perhaps to be supplemented by others—constitute the center of the risk. Environmental issues, especially global warming and urban sprawl, constitute a challenge, as does poverty and the great and growing distance between rich and poor around the world.

Recently, we have seen that higher oil prices, and the energy on which we depend for our prosperity, is of growing importance. We are now overly dependent in this country on petroleum and in the world on hydrocarbons; among them, the excessive use of dirty coal stands out. We also are engaged in a struggle to make nuclear power more proliferation-resistant and environmentally safe.

Now, let me talk about some of the unpredictable elements. Here, my view is no better view than your own. By nature, these are hard subjects to deal with.

One calamity would be to see the ban, now fraying with proliferation, on nuclear weapons use somehow destroyed or broken. Second would be a failure of European unity and a return to a continent of wars and unbridled contention,

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dragging in, once again, the United States as it did in the twentieth century. Continuing catastrophic state failure in Africa, with growing tribalism and genocide should be a concern. So should be the growing linkages in our hemisphere and beyond between autocrats and drug barons with the criminalization of the state. Deep concerns exist, particularly in Asia, especially in Afghanistan and

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before. Looked at another way, if modern diplomacy didn't exist, we would all have to invent it. We will undoubtedly regularly have to reinvent it as we proceed. Some points here, despite the rapid changes in the twenty-first century, remain familiar to us all.

The world will continue to be one of states. International organizations will play a growing role. Hibernation and reclusive behavior, or "go-it-alone-ism," rarely offers a solution. Conflict is increasingly possible, but so, too, is the value of the practices and institutions of diplomacy to deal with conflict, or the potential for such conflict, before it hits us all in the eye. No area, given globalization, can safely be ignored.

The United States, because of its unusual size and strength, is destined to continue to lead, whether it wishes to or not. If we fail, diplomatically and otherwise, to step up to this role, it will cost us dearly. If we do step up to the role, we must assure that others will come with us to help us create the success, spread the costs, and close the credibility gap.

Technology is increasing the value, not decreasing it, of having a woman or man in diplomacy on the spot. Communications and technology are adding value to the work of the man or woman on the spot. Diplomacy writ large, so to speak, is thus even more essential in its broad aspects. So too are the tools of diplomacy—from personal relations, to the knowledge and the ability to convince, to the economic resources and military capability to make it happen.

What, then, should we be doing about all of this? First, there are many needs and priorities that are important to assign. In this country, we should begin

Myanmar, with their growth as worldwide sources of deadly narcotics. We could go on with even more dangerous situations, including broader economic and social collapse as the distinctions in the world between the rich and the poor grow sharper and more virulent in their impact.

Let me now talk about my second point—the role of diplomacy in the future.

The good news for the profession is, unfortunately, that all the potential for bad news in the world makes them and their profession even more necessary than ever

by expanding our budgetary and financial support for those elements of diplomacy that will be critical for the future. In my view, it is truly mindless that we should be spending over \$400 billion each year to fight conflicts when we spend much less than 10 percent of that—\$40 billion—to prevent them.

Here I do not, in any way, want to minimize the value to us of military forces or military deterrence. It's just that the balance is so badly out of kilter that the less we spend on diplomacy, the more we are condemned to engage in combat to solve the world's problems; and that is truly costly.

We need smarter and more effective efforts at foreign assistance. This too requires reforms to bring together the multiple programs now scattered across the government between the Agency for International Development, Defense, State, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and a myriad of domestic agencies.

It is also essential for us to buttress good diplomacy with excellent intelligence. We have, since the publication of the 9/11 report, been deeply engaged in debating this issue. Above the debate, however, it is clear that we need smarter and more effective efforts at intelligence.

It goes without saying that good intelligence supports good diplomacy. Currently, a very large percentage of our intelligence effort goes to support military contingencies. Again, I am not asking to slight the American war fighter; but we do need more help for those whose business it is to resolve potential conflicts before they become hot wars.

We all accept now the need for a single American leader in intelligence and a comprehensive budget. The idea of combining intelligence collection under a single authority makes sense. One aspect should be collection using technical methods such as satellites, electronics and similar activities. The other should be a place where we seem to have a chronic weakness—gathering human intelligence.

At the same time, I strongly believe that the various agencies and departments in our governments should preserve their own analytical capabilities, with a common effort from time to time on producing national intelligence estimates. Here the richness of diversity, the breadth of ideas, and the taking of "footnotes" on intelligence estimates can guarantee that the President gets not only the best of assessments, but understands where there are differences which must be considered.

Turning to the organization charged with carrying out our future diplomacy—the State Department—let me begin by saying that Secretary Powell has

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done an outstanding job in setting management, personnel and budgetary priorities and meeting them.

But let me raise something that has long been on my mind. The days of political appointments are clearly not over, but we should begin to consider a balance between political and career appointments. After all, as one wag has said, it was the business of brain surgery that was the first to be fully professionalized! I think that it is now long past time to reduce from 30 to 10 percent the proportion of political appointees to ambassadorships. There also ought to be a way to control the informal senatorial "hold" system on appointees. A good friend of ours at the United Nations, Ambassador James Cunningham, is now an undeserved victim of that process. Going to 10 percent for non-career Ambassadors was, interestingly, proposed a few years ago by Senator Albert Gore, among others.

The "hold" process allows any senator, for any reason at all, or for no reason at all, to hold up a nomination indefinitely. There ought to be a better way. I would suggest that for ambassadorial appointments the Senate Foreign Relations Committee should be required to ratify any such hold which is in effect for over 30 days by a majority vote of all members.

Public diplomacy, long a mainstay of our Cold War effort, has now, we all agree, fallen on hard times. I cannot answer all the questions about why the U.S. is disliked. But I can suggest some ways to help.

Public diplomacy needs increasing funding for programs that have been successful in the past. Public diplomacy should also play a stronger role in helping to formulate policy. That was the key reason why I supported integration of USIA into the State Department. Experts in public diplomacy need to be placed where the policy comes together. They can suggest ways to craft and present that policy to take into account local sensitivities. I'm not suggesting that policy itself be drafted on the basis of local sensitivities, only that it would be better if the policy process took into account the presentational aspects when it was being put together. The Secretary of State and the leadership team in the State Department should be responsible for public diplomacy.

This may sound bureaucratic, but I believe it is important. We need a bureau in the State Department dedicated, as is the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in its own sphere, to supporting embassies and public diplomacy officers overseas with ideas, programs and financial support.

We need to restart programs that have been helpful in the past. Experts have noted that there are very few Arabic-language translations of important books in English. We need to make wider use of radio, Internet and TV resources, especially in key regions like the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and indeed, in all of the areas populated by Muslims and in their local languages. Libraries and cultural centers were important in the Cold War

and should be reestablished, perhaps integrated, as they are now in Russia and elsewhere, into local institutions, such as universities. We also need to expand and continue cultural and educational programs. The Fulbright program and its analogs are at the heart of this effort. I would hope that we find ways to achieve an endowment for these kinds of programs.

Why not think about a 10 percent increase in the Fulbright budget for ten to 15 years and set it aside in the Treasury Department at interest to earn income for the program? The principal would stay in hands of the U.S. Government. It would help put the Fulbright Program on a self-sustaining basis for at least 50 to 60 percent of the annual need. It would reduce long-term costs and assure the program's continuation. We should, of course, give the Congress a significant role in the allocations, whether from the endowment or in the annual budgetary process, which should continue to meet new program requirements, extraordinary needs, and other special interests of the United States in the Fulbright and similar programs.

Turning to a broader set of considerations, we live in a world where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are among the most important players. They perform a vital role across the board in human rights, environment, and sustainable development, to name just a few. They have great mobilizing and serious funding capability. They, as we all know, played a key role in the land mine convention, the international criminal court, and the treaty on trade in small arms.

One disadvantage of NGOs is that they tend, by focus and definition, to be single-issue organizations. States, as you know, have always had the problem of trying to balance their broad interests in a country like China with a single-issue interest, such as proliferation or human rights. Natural tensions between states and NGOs exist and will not go away. This is one of the reasons why the United States has been unhappy with some of the new treaties negotiated under the leadership of single-interest NGOs.

I have one suggestion to make. For years, our government agencies and departments have dealt with the Congress through a single organization. In State, it has been the Bureau of Legislative Affairs. I would now strongly recommend that we should have a comparable organization in the State Department, reaching out to and working with the large NGO community to assure that their views are taken into account, and that there is a common approach in our diplomacy to their issues. It is now past time when we should rely only on NGO affiliations and relationships to functional bureaus in the Department dealing with the issue of most interest to the NGO.

Now and in the future, international organizations will continue to play a growing and most important role. The UN is the centerpiece of these organizations. And again, if it didn't exist, we would have to invent it. It has a critical role

in making the world function effectively—a role that is almost unsung and unnoticed. But without the UN, airplanes would not be able to operate safely, telecommunications would not function, we would be without health standards, and we would be more hard put than we are to deal with crises and disasters.

I think the next Secretary General should not be, as has been the case in the past, merely a regional choice. That time is past. We need to assure that the best women and men in the world have an opportunity to be considered for this growing and important post. And it is true that each region has already had a turn. I would like to propose to further this purpose that the Security Council set up a nominating panel for its own use. We might have five, seven, or even nine former heads of state and others with worldwide interests and confidence on the panel. The panel could suggest names from all over the globe, in addition to those suggested by states and others, to the Security Council for consideration as the next Secretary General. This would require no change in the Charter.

If this works well, perhaps the Secretary General could consider using the idea for nominations for the senior level appointments that he has to make within the system. The Secretary General would, of course, not be bound, nor would the Security Council, by the suggestions made, but it would certainly help to enrich the field of consideration.

Turning to the Security Council itself, it remains the centerpiece for dealing with international peace and security issues. Frankly, I am less concerned about enlargement, which is receiving a new spurt of attention these days. That process has its own advantages and disadvantages that I will not discuss. But I am in favor of creating a more effective body first and foremost. In that regard, growth and size are a disadvantage, not an advantage. In making the body more effective, it may be time for the United States, and the other permanent members, to take a new lead.

The veto is always a sensitive question. Any diplomat from a permanent member state is always on sensitive ground in discussing the issue. Let me go ahead and suggest one idea. A critical question for the Security Council is how to stay the dead hand of the veto in regard to a number of serious issues it has to face on a regular basis. These include clear-cut cases of one state's aggression against another; humanitarian intervention when it particularly is accompanied by genocide; and nuclear proliferation, especially when referred to the Council under the Nonproliferation Treaty. Interestingly enough, the issue here is to get the Council to act. Interestingly also, almost all of these in the past have been issues where the United States favored action.

What might be done?

One thought has been that an informal "voting convention" might be established among the five permanent members (P-5). The convention might go along the following lines. Where a case arises under one of these three circum-

stances—aggression, humanitarian intervention, or non-proliferation—unless there are three negative votes signaled informally in advance in consultations of the P-5, they would agree in such cases that all would support or, at worst, abstain on the resolution in the formal vote in the Council, thereby allowing action to take place. I have chosen three vetoes arbitrarily; it could be two or four.

To bring along the permanent five members, a provision would have to exclude actions contemplated in the Council that impacted the P-5 territory or other similar vital interest of one of the permanent five members. Another thought would be that the Council would act under the voting convention only if the issue were referred to it by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. It would require U.S. leadership in order to get it done. Happily, it would not require a Charter change. It might well be successful if the bulk of the organization got behind the issue.

Let me now conclude with a brief summary.

The world is becoming more complex, more multilateral, more challenging and more demanding. Diplomacy must hold on to its basic principles and methods while shifting its focus and scope to meet these new challenges. An across-the-board effort is required to make that happen, and changes of many kinds are needed to address new and challenging issues. None is more important than having excellent people, well prepared to take up the challenge. The Fletcher School and its graduates have played that role in the past. The school stands in a wonderful position to meet these urgent needs for the future. Nothing is more essential for the success of diplomacy than that excellent people be well prepared to pursue its possibilities.

I thank the Class of 1947 for this distinguished award, and the school for this chance to speak about the challenges and opportunities facing the diplomacy of the future. ■

