



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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REMARKS BY
MAX M. KAMPELMAN
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
"THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT"

Washington, DC

April 10, 1997

The premise for this session and, I believe, for the day is that our country's foreign policy must re-evaluate the international pattern which dominated the latter part of this century. We felt comfortable, in the main, with the old; and it did help us win the cold war. It is not easy to conceptualize and develop a new approach to our foreign policy, but we seem to agree that we must in order to help us enter the 21st century. I do not challenge that universal assumption, but I do note that our consensus on that need does not encompass in any way a consensus on what that new foreign policy should be and what leadership role, if any, we should assume.

Many in our Congress believe that public opinion calls for us to retreat from too active a leadership posture. They would prefer that we encourage other regions in the world to deal with their own problems as we, wherever we can, mind our own needs. Our foreign affairs budget has, therefore, been cut by 25% in recent years (14% in the last 2 years alone) and is now down to about 1% of our national budget. Most everyone in this audience knows the data, however, which reports that the American people believe that 18% of our budget goes to foreign affairs, that the 18% is too high, and that they would

like that figure to be 10%, ten times more than we actually spend. So much for the requirement to satisfy public opinion.

Whether our international affairs cost us 1% of our budget, or reaches 10%, we should look for a moment at what tasks it seeks to accomplish and whether they are in our national interest:

1. This budget obviously supports our diplomacy, our embassies, the State Department, the United Nations and other international organizations. It pays the salary of the person who issues our passports (6 million last year), or replaces the one lost, or helps if any of us is in trouble overseas. These people are fundamentally our eyes and ears overseas, and it is not in our interest to be blind.
2. We also ask our embassies to help our business people overseas and thereby stimulate American exports. These exports today provide, I am told, a minimum of 300,000 American jobs;
3. We want to promote democracy and market reform overseas in the hope that we can lay the foundation for a stability which will avoid a new cold war, one which cost us trillions of dollars;
4. A small portion of that budget goes to join international efforts to control contagious diseases, water and air pollution, terrorism, crime and drugs. These threats to mankind know no national boundary lines;
5. Our international humanitarian assistance, a non-controversial item, also comes out of this budget. This helps refugees, feeds starving people, helps disaster victims;

6. Finally, we have learned that wars elsewhere, such as in the Balkans, the Middle East, or Asia and Africa, can cost us billions if not contained or avoided. We remember the oil crisis. The words, "U.N. peacekeeping" are becoming controversial, but its objective is to avoid risking American lives, and we should remember other countries pick up 75% of the cost. This sum also pays to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation.

I am convinced that the American people want our government adequately to fund these activities. But they sense that our government does not possess an overarching purpose with respect to our role in this new world with its inevitable challenges and opportunities. They do not see this over-arching view because it has not clearly been presented to them. Obviously, this is a role for leadership, but our leaders have blown an uncertain trumpet — and the uncertainty is contagious.

After a long period of silence and ambiguity in foreign affairs, which sometimes appeared to reflect a lack of interest if not a lack of clarity, our President and his advisors are now working to verbalize and concretize a foreign policy aimed at advancing our values as well as our national and international interests. There is a growing recognition that a great deal of healing is required in this world of turmoil and that our country can help apply that healing.

Much of this however, has been, regrettably, drowned out and blinded by the glare and noise of domestic scandals and partisan temptation. The uncertainty of the message has also been compounded by discordant notes, increasingly now coming from the Pentagon. In one of his first national press conferences, the Secretary of Defense, whom I greatly admired as a Senator, announced to the American people and the world that our country is too much involved in humanitarian ventures! What a symbol to convey. And a few weeks later, he announced that our troops in Bosnia are "not there to enforce

resettlements (of refugees) and guarantee that kind of security," thereby giving comfort to the ethnic cleansers of the area and undermining the promises of the Dayton Accords. This, on top of the President's decision, after meeting with the Chiefs, that the 68 indicted and freely roaming war criminals will not be apprehended by NATO or US troops and brought to the Hague for trial. The sounds of the trumpet are not only unclear, but increasingly hard to hear.

This national uncertainty and lack of clarity as to our role is particularly troubling when we consider that the 535 members of the Congress cannot institutionally or practically show us the way into the 21st century.

My colleagues and I within the American Academy of Diplomacy have been urging the establishment of a high level "blue-ribbon" bi-partisan commission to help create a new American consensus on the nature and consequences of a foreign policy for our country as we move from the Cold War to the 21st century. The CSIS and many other think tanks, non-governmental organizations, citizen groups, scholars and academic institutions have given and continue to give serious thought to this task. A respected bi-partisan commission should assemble these thoughts, take testimony, encourage further study by our government and private institutions. Our government, business leaders, labor officials, NGOs, churches have a great deal to offer in our developmental process. I am convinced that such a national consensus on broad principals and directions can be arrived at. The Stimson Center, here in Washington, has been commissioned by at least two foundations to begin laying the groundwork for such a commission to function.

Once a direction, substance and program are arrived at, the commission should examine whether our existing government institutions are adequate for the task. Is our national security apparatus in a current position to help us move forward? Should and, if so, how should the National Security Act of 1947

be modified? Is our State Department sufficiently well organized? Are we making wise use of new technologies? How do we improve, integrate, sharpen the relationship between State, Defense, the CIA, the NSC, Energy, USIA, AID, and the other various departments with an interest and a role in our international relations?

The United States Institute of Peace, a few days ago, had a two-day conference on "Virtual Diplomacy." I am personally in the dark ages in this area. I was astounded at the developments and their implications. Will or should instant voice communication replace cabled messages? How obsolete are traditional diplomatic practices? Has growing technological transparency made secrecy impossible? If so, what are the implications for our intelligence agencies? Is cyber-democracy more than a term? Innovations in technology have long been recognized as drivers of social changes. We today barely understand those implications or dangers for us. When I was in Belgrade in December on a brief government assignment, I personally witnessed the strength of the new communication technologies in assembling via the Internet hundred of thousands of demonstrators in spite of government opposition and government controlled media coverage.

What do these developments mean for our embassies? Do we need ambassadors any longer? Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, which I chair, is now completing a five-embassy study of this question which is designed to help us answer the question.

Finally, and potentially most important, how do we react to the changing concept of sovereignty?

The challenge is here. There is a great deal we do not know as we enter the 21st century. Let us begin to find answers.

REMARKS BY
MAX M. KAMPELMAN
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
PANEL DISCUSSION
RESPONDING TO CURRENT AND FUTURE
U.S. SECURITY AND POLITICAL INTERESTS

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