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Revitalizing International Cooperation: A Bipartisan Agenda

On November 29-30, 2007, the Stanley Foundation convened a consensus-building exercise with a bipartisan group of accomplished foreign policy experts. Participants were asked to identify policy approaches the next administration can use to work with international partners on key global challenges. Two major sets of issues seemed ripe for agreement across the political spectrum: counterterrorism in connection with the wider battle of ideas and spreading the benefits of globalization.

There was no expectation that the group would neutralize all of their political differences. Instead they looked for common elements in their approaches. The results of the discussion offer hope that US cooperation internationally *can* be revitalized with fresh ideas. And while one potential new administration (with its set of advisers) is bound to differ from another, the statement below demonstrates substantial overlap. The text was drafted and reviewed by the participants listed at the end and largely reflects the views of the group, though not every participant agrees with every point.

David Shorr, Program Officer
The Stanley Foundation
Conference Chair

Terrorism and the Wider Battle of Ideas

At one level, the United States counters terrorist threats by rolling up terror networks, foiling their plots, and disrupting their infrastructure, sometimes through military action. In the past six years, America's armed forces, intelligence community, and law enforcement agencies have put Al Qaeda under severe pressure and thwarted a number of plotted attacks such as the transatlantic flights from London and Paris—and many others that remain classified.

As successful as we have been in undermining key cells and networks, there is a broader context, and challenge, for counterterrorism and the rest of our foreign policy. The larger struggle pits the empowerment of people against the concentration of power, openness to change (even as its pace quickens) as opposed to nostalgia for an idealized past, and the clash of civilizations versus universal ideals. Yet as huge and overwhelming as this struggle might seem, the irony is that our pursuit of American ideals might not be ambitious enough. The real long war—if properly understood and prosecuted—will help bring peoples together around a shared vision of a more just world.

The use of the word *war* to describe the struggle against terrorism remains controversial, and resolution of that dispute is elusive. “Battle of ideas” is a more fitting title for the focus here, but participants in the Stanley Foundation meeting viewed the idea of a *long war* (or struggle) as quite useful.

Because the United States has an ambitious vision about the spread of human rights, prosperity, and democracy, we must recognize that it will only be achieved over time. Such recognition points toward engagement in a steady and measured effort rather than the pursuit of precipitous revolutionary change. The latter, with its abrupt and convulsive action, can produce increased resistance and unintended consequences. The sustained approach is also more durable because it allows progress to emerge more organically and is less politically divisive, internationally and domestically.

The ultimate aim of the extended battle of ideas is to strengthen a global consensus around shared goals. Such a focus will help the United States to better see beyond itself toward a strategic concept that takes in the fuller picture of the world—our interests in the world as a whole and the interests others share with us. Ultimately, the objective is to have more of the world feel stronger kinship with the United States, in part through a more concerted effort toward increased prosperity and peace.

As we adopt this strategic vision, America’s contribution to the global greater good will be so woven into our policy that there will be no need for special gestures of political or economic largesse. Much of this will take the form of long-term investments in peace and prosperity. This approach de-emphasizes the connection between economic development and terrorism, instead viewing economic development as a good in itself.

Ultimately, the battle of ideas is as important to the United States as any military confrontation or contingency. A strong military is an indispensable element of American power in this struggle, as in our foreign policy as a whole. But if we are successful, our efforts will gradually draw on the military less and civilians more.

This makes the weak condition of our civilian agencies an urgent problem. Not only must we add human resources (i.e., personnel), but also strengthen their personal skills and competencies through training and international exposure. This is not a

matter merely of strengthening the State Department, although that is an important element. A comprehensive view of the challenge recognizes that we must bring to bear the full measure of US government powers and capabilities—including modernization of intelligence, immigration and customs, foreign aid, and other areas that are non-military in nature.

Our commitment to the battle of ideas will also require better tracking, measuring, and balancing of resources devoted to multiple issues and regions. Currently, we lack a clear idea of how much money is being spent, by whom, and with what practical results.

In a globalizing world, the United States will only succeed if Americans greatly increase their understanding of other societies—yet another goal that will only be reached over the long term. In preparation for a world of greater and greater global interconnections, American students would be well served to study abroad as an essential part of their higher education. American embassies must become increasingly proactive in interacting with local leaders and citizens. Stronger language training is absolutely vital both for those in our government (especially in the intelligence, diplomatic, and military spheres) as well as our society at large. Likewise, it is critical for international students to come to this country. Unless we give students and other visitors their own firsthand experience of America, the negative caricatures will continue to be the dominant image internationally.

The opposite of a patient and steady long struggle is a constant sense of emergency. If we convince ourselves that there should be no limits to what we will do to prevent an attack, we can begin to lose some of the strength borne of our ideals and moral authority. As we shift to a steadier approach, we need to make it a priority to have a transparent and just process worthy of government by laws.

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, America could reasonably have expected (and actually received) some latitude in our handling of detainees. In the six years that followed, however, bottlenecks, abuses such as Abu Ghraib, and legal controversies have depleted the benefit of the doubt that other nations are willing to grant. And while the Bush administration has significantly reduced the number of prisoners held at Guantanamo, it remains for many a symbol of American imperious-

ness. In the event that present civilian courts are deemed inadequate to the problem of prosecuting terrorists, the administration should work with Congress to devise a broadly acceptable legal structure that provides for appropriate judicial review. The United States should bolster the relevant international norms by reaffirming the treaty obligations that it accepted as a signatory to the Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions. In general, we should not exempt broad categories of government action from legal accountability. In short, we must take measures to dispel the widespread international perception of America as a nation that tacitly condones torture.

When looked at in the context of the battle of ideas, it is clear that the impatient approach draws more focus to our own behavior than that of our adversaries, where it properly belongs. The international attention drawn by the problems associated with our narrower counterterror approach is a distraction from the fundamental objective of building a more just and peaceful world. The more widely the moral authority of the United States is acknowledged, the easier it will be to stigmatize the use of terror as the atrocity that it is. After all, putting terrorists out of business is itself a benefit to many countries and the world as a whole.

Among America's international priorities, a durable commitment to help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be high on the list. We must articulate and promote a vision of a democratic Arab Middle East with a secure Israel; otherwise, we will be acquiescing to a status quo that is unstable and dangerous. Additionally, we need a more comprehensive concept of public diplomacy, emphasizing the capacity of our society and diplomats to interact organically with others—particularly as we strengthen language and cultural skills—rather than overreliance on a kind of top-down, strategic communication that is driven primarily by an unattainable drive for absolute control of the message. Trying to control all interactions, rather than encouraging the expression of the diversity of American opinion, is not only unworkable, but it disarms us in the battle of ideas.

As the United States develops a stronger ability to connect with the national interests of others, we will become more effective in combating terrorism. For instance, it is important to see not just one terrorist threat but many different threats. Not only

will we understand better what confronts us, but we will see more clearly which different threats engage the different interests, and thereby the support, of other nations. We have learned that when we look at the threat monolithically, it carries an implicit all-or-nothing demand that can backfire. Focusing more on the distinct strategies and tactics among terrorists could create new opportunities to forge partnerships with a range of other nations.

Overall, we must be on the lookout for and change policies that offer insufficient practical value for counterterrorism in exchange for the friction they create internationally. In our immigration policies, for instance, we have allowed the growth of counterproductive bureaucratic incentives that lead to bad, unintended outcomes, such as a decline of student exchanges and foreign visitors stemming from a frustrating and off-putting visa process. A patient, as opposed to panicked, approach to the long struggle will refocus US policy from simplistic and marginally effective practices, such as color-coded alert levels, to wiser and more balanced ones, such as effective customs practices that reflect the importance of allowing and encouraging lawful visitors to our country as well as keeping terrorists out.

The United States can do much to close the existing gap between the expectations its ideals invite and the perception of its actions in the long struggle, but other nations likewise have a role and responsibility. Democratic friends and allies should know better than to indulge in demagogic America-bashing for domestic political gain. Serious disagreement can exist among allies yet be handled through diplomacy rather than grandstanding.

While the long war does not push for precipitous overthrow of all repressive regimes, it will build broad international support and political will to promote just treatment of peoples everywhere. Over time, leaders who are repressive internally or aggressive and disruptive internationally will encounter an international community less tolerant of their actions. The long war will also open up political space and offer outside inspiration and support for local populations hungry for democratic change—making it less likely or necessary for the United States to intervene to achieve these goals. For all nations, the battle of ideas requires that they, too, commit themselves to promoting the global common good rather than being absorbed in parochial interests.

The United States should always be looking for other countries to work with us. In every endeavor, our initial impulse should be to look for cooperative partners and mechanisms, resorting to unilateral action only when it has determined that multilateral mechanisms and international cooperation would not help accomplish, or might even undercut, the task at hand. The associated assumption should be that cooperation may require some sort of compromise. In particular, when we ourselves are struggling with a solution to a complex problem, we should not be afraid to ask allies, coalition partners, and friends for advice on alternative approaches that might be more effective.

Success in this struggle will come as the United States assiduously works to build the more prosperous and just world we and others seek. The United States does not need a threat from terrorists to know what it stands for.

Trade, Aid, and the Private Sector: Spreading the Benefits of Globalization

Increased globalization serves the best interests of people around the world while also contributing to US economic and national security, though it is not yet delivering to potential. The United States should seize the opportunity and make the case that a more integrated international economic system based on free trade and increased private investment, supplemented by targeted aid, is the best path toward development, economic growth, and reduced levels of poverty.

We should work more effectively to help people in the developing world, especially those living in severe poverty, share in the opportunities and benefits that globalization offers. At the same time, their governments and private sectors also should work to prepare them for the inevitable dislocations caused by ongoing changes in the global economy—just as US development and trade policies should seek to smooth the bumps of a globalizing world.

In order to sustain momentum toward a more prosperous world, broad political support must be built on *a basic concept of globalization that must be repositioned, articulated, and brought directly to publics the world over*, in tangible terms with real-world examples that are relevant to diverse global constituencies.

Central to this concept is the idea that US development policies should seek to empower people by

contributing to stable national environments where individuals can improve their standard of living, feel more confident in the future, and work to build a better future for their children. The goal is lower poverty levels and enhanced opportunity for all.

Achieving this goal will require greatly enhancing the effectiveness of our aggregate development efforts, which in turn will depend on an integrated and balanced approach to foreign aid and international trade policies, with all of their crosscutting factors. These development drivers help to create fundamental conditions under which broad progress is possible on a wide range of issues. Among these universally important inputs are governance, information, education, and basic infrastructure. For example:

- **Good governance** is essential, and we should encourage continued progress toward greater responsiveness, public accountability, and transparency.
- **Access to information** is empowering, and the incubation and protection of the independent media are prerequisites for successful development and progress across all sectors.
- **Education** will empower the poor around the world and also help us to win the wider battle of ideas.
- **Infrastructure**—from roads to electricity to broadband—will help provide access to markets and connections to the wider world, linking those who are now cut off from the global system.

US international trade policy has an enormous and direct impact on the efficacy of our development efforts. International trade is not a zero-sum game, and our trade policies should complement our development efforts by espousing bold measures to eliminate agricultural and other input subsidies and by seeking to open markets for entrepreneurs and farmers across the developing world.

It is essential to recognize that US, European, and other national governments and multilateral development banks are merely one set of actors in the development arena; the private sector is playing an increasingly important role in this field. Private sector contributions and inputs—either by individuals, corporations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or philanthropies—are underrecognized in the traditional development discourse. Increased coordination

and enhanced collaboration between public and private sector efforts will help capitalize on the strengths of these actors and help to generate improved results. Doing so will also broaden and deepen ownership and engagement among domestic constituencies in the United States.

Maximizing the benefits of globalization will not be possible without a higher and more consistent level of domestic political support for US leadership in the foreign assistance and trade arenas. Similarly, reliable and bipartisan domestic political support is a necessary ingredient in sustaining our international engagement and in combating the nascent protectionism, isolationism, and xenophobia that are the enemies of progress, prosperity, and stability.

Policy Principles and Recommendations*

1. Private Sector

The time, effort, and resources focused on official development assistance are disproportionate to its ultimate impact in comparison with businesses, philanthropic enterprises, and civil society organizations. Private sector capital flows, for example, total approximately 10 times the size of all official donor assistance, and private remittances alone are now larger than the sum total of all government programs worldwide—larger than all development assistance together. *An updated development discourse should therefore underscore and better leverage the enormous impact of the private sector.*

2. Trade

Americans benefit from trade liberalization along with the rest of the world; according to a University of Michigan study, eliminating trade barriers could boost US annual income by \$497 billion.[†] That is why the next US president should work to drastically reduce trade barriers and, in particular, *make a bold move early in his or her first term toward elimination of agricultural subsidies.* Of course, European markets, and others, also must become more open to agricultural and other commodities, products, and services. Likewise, Africans and agrarian-based

economies throughout the developing world will benefit from increased agriculture research and education (e.g., on orphan crops).

3. Education

The United States should be a leader in encouraging the spread of primary, secondary, and higher education, including basic financial literacy, to help families and small enterprises build their own prosperity. Education is an unalloyed good in any society and a key driver of development. Support for augmented public and private spending on improved education is far more sustainable when funds can be transparently tracked—all the way from source to individual local schools and local education initiatives. Domestically, government's role should be to help people to prepare for dislocations.

4. Governance and Transparency

Transparency and accountability in governance is absolutely essential. Corruption is among the most pernicious obstacles to development and poverty reduction. Fighting corruption should not only be a goal of donor governments, but should also rank as a high priority for governments in the developing world. Because corruption encompasses the developed and developing world—and involves a range of actors in both the public and private sectors—everyone has a role to play and responsibility to help fight its corrosive and debilitating effects.

5. US Food Assistance

US food assistance should, as a matter of priority, avoid distorting local agricultural markets. *The first preference for American food aid should be to buy local/regional when possible—subject to availability at sufficient quality and with transportation infrastructure permitting.*

6. Reform of Government Structures

The domestic and international development bureaucracies that we have inherited are based on post-World War II-era assumptions about the world that are no longer valid. *Reform of US foreign assistance programs is essential; in fact, a major overhaul of these agencies is mandatory,*

* With specific policy prescriptions italicized.

[†] Drusilla K. Brown, Alan V. Deardorff, and Robert M. Stern, "Multilateral, Regional, and Bilateral Trade-Policy Options for the United States and Japan," Discussion Paper # 490, Research Seminar in International Economics, University of Michigan School of Public Policy.

not optional. Streamlining and redefining the mission of the Department of State and the wide range of US foreign assistance agencies—from the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator to the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to USAID—will help these agencies make a positive impact where they operate.

In order to maintain domestic US support, it will be important for the next administration to *highlight the positive impact of US official development assistance focused on urgent global health problems such as AIDS (through President Bush's PEPFAR initiative) and good-governance success stories (through the MCC).*

There are significant legislative restrictions, regulations, and bureaucratic constraints that prevent effective reform of America's foreign assistance programs. The executive branch and Congress must work together to rewrite America's foreign assistance laws and reform the related institutions. Central to this effort, *political leaders must more clearly articulate the purpose of official development assistance to better enable accountability and performance.* At the same time, though, they must *support sufficient flexibility so that core development objectives and principles can be pursued in differing operating environments.*

The Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral development banks can also make a significant contribution to the spread of globalization's benefits by intensifying the focus on results for all development efforts. These organizations—together with the United Nations and World Trade Organization—are blessed with remarkably talented, knowledgeable, and dedicated individuals from around the globe who comprise an extraordinarily valuable development asset. However, *the institutions and their governance are in urgent need of reform and revitalization, and must themselves be held accountable for tangible results,* or they will lose support from donor governments and sink into irrelevance.

7. International Support

The United States must make a greater sustained effort to build international consensus around common development objectives. Using diplomacy to communicate a positive, forward-looking agenda is a basic prerequisite for achieving a constructive, international development dialogue.

This includes a clearer and more accommodating approach to educating various audiences about the principles underpinning the United States' public and private sectors. In doing so, however, we must not be defensive. We should hold to the merit of our principles and the validity of US national interests. As we improve communication and diplomacy—particularly the art of listening—it will only contribute toward consensus, for instance on the value of an open international trading system to the world's poorest people.

8. Domestic Support

The policies of the next administration must bolster Americans' belief that globalization will mean increased standards of living at home and around the world. Just as in any country, results-oriented and forward-looking government *policy that anticipates as well as responds to the inevitable social dislocation in a fast-changing economy will be crucial to maintaining public support.* The same care must be taken to tailor the approach to the desired results as in the rest of international economic policy. Without it, we will waste an enormous sum of money, consume valuable effort, and forfeit irreplaceable space and time on the international and domestic agendas.

Building US public support for the policies we propose is a long-term endeavor. Work on this must begin promptly and focus on an integrated approach to the public and private frameworks that create positive linkages between policies and results.

Stephen E. Biegun
Derek Chollet
Clarence Daryl Edwards
Heather Hurlburt
James Jochum
Brian Katulis
Kevin S. Kellems
Tod Lindberg
Suzanne Nossel
Brett D. Schaefer
Kori Schake
Karen A. Tramontano
Richard S. Williamson

The Stanley Foundation

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The Stanley Foundation's work recognizes the essential roles of the policy community, media professionals, and the involved public in building sustainable peace. Its work aims to connect people from different backgrounds, often producing clarifying insights and innovative solutions.

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The Stanley Foundation
209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA
563-264-1500
563-264-0864 fax
info@stanleyfoundation.org

Production: Amy Bakke and Kathy Sunderbruch