

Outgoing President's Message

As I depart this good job after ten years, I leave the Council on Foreign Relations, but not the world, better off. The world has become more unruly and more dangerous, and it brims over with cries of injustice. Amid this turmoil, perhaps because of it, the Council has thrived. I shall bring together these two stories, of the world and of the Council, later on. Linger with me briefly in the telling, as a kind of act of faith in my 40 years of service as a government official, journalist, and think-tank thinker. Patience for a story, with only a little sermon.

A decade after the Cold War's end, it can be seen that for all the razzle-dazzle of the nuclear standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States and the evil of the Soviet empire, international matters at that time had a relatively high degree of order, stability, and predictability. Except for the extremely dangerous Cuban missile crisis of 1962, tensions were high, while the risk of nuclear war or even of direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was low. Political and often economic life was bad for those in the communist world. For people in the West, and especially in America, life was pretty good . . . and safe.

Now, we do not feel safe, and we are not safe. No state on earth will likely challenge our overwhelming military power. But terrorists, with or without weapons of mass destruction, have done so and will do so again. With this newfound and unwanted vulnerability, Americans have joined history.

It can be fairly argued that the liberals and the moderates of the Clinton administration saw the new danger but did not rally the nation to the barricades. It can also be fairly said that the neoconservatives and conservatives of the Bush administration initially discounted the new terrorist threats in favor of warnings about traditional military challenges from great powers, especially China. Only after the tragedy and wake-up call of September 11 did the Bush team refocus, and refocus hard, on our nation's vulnerability and what needed to be done.

President George W. Bush compelled the nation to stare at the new dangers, but I think any president would have done so after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Where he led, where others might not have gone, was to the articulation of the point and the initiation of the policy that to meet the new threat, the United States has to be very tough-minded, tough in action and prepared to use military force to forestall or retaliate against terrorist attacks or nations abetting terrorist attacks. Good for him, and good for us. The historical record on terrorism shows us clearly enough that terrorists and tyrants are not moved by understanding and anti-poverty programs. Their outrage and obsessions can be cured almost always and only by putting them behind bars or into graves. Decent people can only shudder



As of July 1, 2003, Leslie H. Gelb holds the positions of President Emeritus and Board Fellow.



The first Hemispheric Meeting of Councils on Foreign Relations was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 30–31, 2003. Pictured are representatives from Councils from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, the United States, and Uruguay. Council participants: Leslie H. Gelb, Carla A. Hills, Richard W. Murphy, and Tomás Amorim.

at these thoughts and words. But our leaders, alas, must make others—the terrorists—shudder at them as well.

But the story and the policy cannot begin and end with toughness and force. It can only start there. If what passes in our country for a foreign policy debate would descend for a while from its theological thin air to the bracing valley of common sense, some policy elements in addition to force and toughness would leap out. First, we cannot hunt down the terrorists by ourselves or beat

them with guns alone. We need others to see their interests in fighting terrorists and to help. That requires co-operation, and cooperation requires compromise. Apparently to some, compromise equals capitulation and is therefore totally unacceptable. To which common sense would say that capitulation is capitulation, and compromise certainly need not be. Second, after force comes the difficult part—making peace, building the conquered lands into better and safer places. Notice I



Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives (D-CA), Jane Harman, and Theodore C. Sorensen at the March 7, 2003, David A. Morse Lecture, "Principle and Power."



*Speaker Michael O'Hanlon, Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, Brookings Institution, and Speaker Kenneth M. Pollack, Author, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, at the October 17, 2002, Meeting, "Iraq: A Town Hall Meeting."*



Helene D. Gayle and Jennifer Joseph at the June 12, 2003, Dinner to celebrate the appointment of Princeton N. Lyman as the Ralph Bunche Senior Fellow in Africa Policy Studies.



did not say turning liberated lands into a democratic, free-market paradise. Even the United States, a land blessed by its isolation and riches and freedoms, took some 200 years to reach its present state of holy perfection. Let the formerly oppressed and now liberated strive initially to equal Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago of the 1950s in lawfulness and economic well-being. But, first in Afghanistan and now perhaps in Iraq as well, the Bush team finds the rigors of cooperating with others and nation-building to be a goal too far, an interest not worth pursuing at high cost.

The costs would be excessive, however, only if we failed to pursue a policy of cooperation, compromise, and nation-building alongside the cocked guns and swagger. It is in the melding of these two strains of policy that the Council can do some good.

My mantra has been that half of what the Council does is interesting and a tenth is useful, and those are very high percentages. Because we are uniquely bipartisan in membership, nonpartisan in leadership, and very careful in what we say and write, we have standing here and abroad. People will pay attention because they see our fairness—not artificial balancing games, but fairness.

Speaker Amy Myers Jaffe, Senior Energy Adviser, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University (on screen), Speaker Edward P. Djerejian, Director, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University (on screen), Speaker Frank G. Wisner II, Vice Chairman, External Affairs, American International Group, Inc., Presider Rachel Bronson, and Speaker Laith Kubba, President, Iraq National Group, at the January 16, 2003, Meeting, "Iraq: The Day After."



Presider Peter G. Peterson and Speaker Paul D. Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense, at the January 23, 2003, Meeting, "Iraq: What Does Disarmament Look Like?"



Speaker Hamid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Nicholas Platt, George Soros, Paul Soros, and Stanley S. Arkin at the September 13, 2002, "Meeting with Hamid Karzai."



Speaker Stephen J. Hadley, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser, Maurice Sonnenberg, Kenneth J. Bialkin, and James Baker Sitrick at the February 12, 2003, "Meeting with Stephen Hadley."



Speaker Jane Holl Lute, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, United Nations Foundation, Speaker Joseph Cirincione, Senior Associate and Director, Non-Proliferation Project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Speaker Charles H. Ferguson, Scientist-in-Residence, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, at the April 10, 2003, Meeting, "ABM, CTBT, NPT, START I, II & III: So Why So Much WMD?"

Speaker James A. Baker III, Senior Partner, Baker Botts LLP, Presider Leslie H. Gelb, and Speaker Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman, Kissinger Associates, Inc., at the May 6, 2003, Meeting, "A Conversation with Former Secretaries of State."

We have begun to use that reputation to better perform our duty as one of the guardians of the quality of information and ideas in our society. Along with perhaps a few dozen other think tanks, great universities, and foundations, we have a special responsibility to protect the quality of public debate. That means calling balls and strikes about facts, about what we know and do not know, so that interested citizens can find their way through the dense fog of untruths and carelessness that now fills our public discourse. It also means the obligation to help define, manage, and solve policy problems, to have ideas about how to make the world a better and safer place for us and others.

These tasks are hellishly hard. But the Council is trying, and not doing badly on both counts. We have a potent site, "The Source," at www.cfr.org, that helps the public sort out fact from fiction and leave gray areas where they belong. Through direct questions and answers, careful research and reporting, clear language, and fairness, we give people information they can rely on. We also provide the ideas to help solve problems through our Task Force reports, done independently by our very able fellows and our unparalleled members. And the books and articles produced by our fellows add



Speaker Pascal Lamy, Trade Commissioner, European Commission, Presider Lionel Barber, and Speaker Robert B. Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative, at the November 6, 2002, McKinsey Executive Roundtable Series in International Economics, "Globalization, Trade, and Development: Are the United States and the European Union in It for the Long Run?"



Speaker Robert W. Kagan, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Presider Leslie H. Gelb, and Speaker Tony Judt, Director, Remarque Institute, New York University, at the October 8, 2002, John B. Hurford Memorial Lecture, "Americans Are from Mars, Europeans Are from Venus: They Agree on Little and Understand Each Other Less and Less."

needed depth. My mind races on to tell you more, but you'll see the more as you read through this report.

Let me reserve the last measure for those who worked with me these ten years to keep the Council a good and useful place for members—young members especially—policy experts, and interested citizens. I demanded a great deal from my colleagues on the staff, and they met those standards. I thank them and cherish them. I could not have been luckier in Board leadership and mentorship. Peter G. Peterson and Maurice R. Greenberg and, more recently, Carla A. Hills and William J. McDonough,

were friends and partners—and they made it fun. Pete and Hank were mentors and fathers, and Pete sometimes a mother also. These are all people—staff and Board and members—who can work with my very able friend and successor, Richard N. Haass, to make the world a better and safer place. The Council has the standing and talent to do this. Moreover, as a privileged place and a guardian of our democracy, it has the duty to try.

Leslie H. Gelb
President Emeritus



Speaker Pervez Musharraf, Chief Executive and President of Pakistan, and Presider Richard C. Holbrooke at the September 13, 2002, Meeting at the Asia Society, "A New Architecture for Peace and Stability in South Asia."



David Rockefeller, Bette Bao Lord, and Winston Lord at the October 1, 2002, Annual Dinner for the Board of Directors, International Advisory Board, and Harold Pratt Associates, "Videoconference with Senator Joseph R. Biden."



Fouad Ajami and Washington SyCip at the October 1, 2002, Annual Dinner for the Board of Directors, International Advisory Board, and Harold Pratt Associates, "Videoconference with Senator Joseph R. Biden."



"Wargame: Iraq," a two-hour MSNBC special, featured Leslie H. Gelb, Council fellows, and members in mock National Security Council sessions gaming out possible scenarios leading up to the war. The program aired on November 25, 2002.



Council members applaud Leslie H. Gelb at the opening of his last National Conference as Council president in June 2003.