The Age of Diplomacy

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International Conference on Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

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Mr. Foreign Minister, I extend to you my congratulations and my thanks to you and your government for convening this important conference. The subject – achieving a world free of nuclear weapons – is of transcendent importance. I and many others believe that, so far as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their potential use is concerned, we are at a tipping point. The danger is all too real. The simple continuation of present practice with regard to nuclear weapons is leading in the wrong direction. We need to change the direction.

You have all read the two essays in the *Wall Street Journal* signed by me with William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, along with many others. I will not repeat here the arguments made in these essays, but I do

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want to underline a central argument made in them. We set out a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and we examined in some detail the content of steps that need to be taken if we are to attain that goal. These points are interrelated. As we say, "Without the bold vision, the actions will not be perceived as fair or urgent. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible."

My objective here is to advance the argument by setting out some guideposts that will help us attain our objectives. I have entitled this paper "The Age of Diplomacy" because these guideposts all involve an immense effort in diplomacy, using that term in the broadest sense.

The **first guidepost** is the creation of a deep and widely held perception of the reality of the problem and of the stakes involved. Only with this reality in the gut as well as in the head of the body politics will difficult actions be possible. The stakes are huge and people on every continent have a major interest in the outcome.

The world economy, while apparently in something of a rough spot right now, is fundamentally strong on a global scale. Expansion is taking place in most countries and in all regions of the world.

A world once split by the cold war now operates as a global economy, able to raise standards of living by a broader application of the law of

comparative advantage. Low-income-per-capita countries, as in the case of China, India, Brazil, now Indonesia, and others, are experiencing rapid economic advances. New middle classes are emerging. Poverty, while still a huge problem, is going down. Of course, there are problems. The expansion will wax and wane somewhat. Some people's incomes are rising faster than others' – as is always true – but relatively few people are absolutely worse off than before. In many respects, you could say that the world has never been at such a propitious moment – that a golden age is upon us. So a wide swath of the world's population has a lot to lose from an act of terror – a nuclear attack on a city – that would be a human catastrophe and highly disruptive.

At the same time, there is more tension than ever in the world as destructive weapons, even nuclear weapons, appear in more hands, as the international system for limiting their spread erodes, and as loosely structured arrays of Islamic extremists, some supported by Iran, use the weapon of terror. The nation-state, the historic way of organizing civilized life and governmental activity, is under attack, and all too many parts of the world are barely governed. Such places, used by terrorists for training and launching attacks, are a grave danger to the civilized world.

On top of all this, we must face the problem of proliferation. The number of states seeking nuclear weapons or their precursors is in the process of expanding. The prospect of increased numbers of nuclear power plants means that the problems of controlling the process of uranium enrichment and dealing with spent fuel must be addressed with urgency.

During the cold war, nuclear weapons served the purpose of deterrence. While deterrence worked, anyone who was closely involved is all too aware of some close calls. The more states there are that have nuclear weapons, the more fragile is the application of deterrence strategy as a way of preventing their use, and the less credible is Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty for encouraging states with nuclear weapons to phase down their reliance on them and even finally phase them out. Of course, the terrorists who now seek nuclear weapons essentially cannot be deterred. If they get a weapon, they will use it.

Somehow, the world's perception of the nuclear threat receded after the end of the cold war. Often, problems are not given the attention they deserve until a tragedy occurs. We cannot wait for a nuclear Pearl Harbor or 9/11. We must get ahead of the game to prevent an even more catastrophic event than those that have been seared into our memories. If we wait – if a

nuclear accident occurs – the world will be changed so dramatically that we will not recognize it.

So wake up, everybody. The danger is real and the potential consequences are of catastrophic proportions.

The **second guidepost** to a successful effort is to reassure people that a sensible, practical, do-able process exists to deal effectively with the problem. Sometimes problems are described in such a way that people simply throw up their hands in frustration. Well, the problem *is* staggering, but practical, do-able, identifiable steps can be taken that will put us on the road to success. We need to let people know that an action program is available and then get that program started.

In our second essay, in particular, we reflected on papers presented at a conference last October at Stanford University's Hoover Institution in collaboration with Sam Nunn's Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), where these steps were discussed in detail. Many were identified as actions that could be taken promptly and that would put us on the road to a safer world. My colleagues Sid Drell and Jim Goodby will say more about these steps, so I will limit myself to making one point about them.

I have said that this must be the age of diplomacy. We must consider the immense diplomacy needed to take the steps that have been identified.

Diplomatic leadership from the very top is essential. No doubt foreign ministries will be expected to organize the effort. Quite obviously, that effort must be taken side by side with ministries of defense.

I would like to highlight another ingredient of the diplomacy of the future. Almost all of the steps involved have a major scientific and technical component. Foreign ministries, with all due respect to their immense gifts of persuasion and intelligence, are almost always unable to grapple on their own with these issues. Take the problem of the nuclear fuel cycle. What is required in enrichment capacity to produce the fissile material needed for a bomb? How would we go about detecting the presence of such capability? What means are available to deter or, if detected, to eliminate that effort? An alternative is needed. Under international supervision, can there be a set of centers where uranium is enriched, but not to weapons-grade material? Can the world be brought to agree that such centers, ready to provide power plant fuel at a reasonable price, would suffice? That is a diplomatic undertaking of immense difficulty and importance that can only be accomplished by teams that include scientific capability, private as well as public.

The same can be said for the problem of dealing with spent fuel. Can an agreement be reached in which complete confidence can be placed that

spent fuel will be retrieved and dealt with satisfactorily? How can we keep it from being turned into the plutonium needed to produce a bomb? Or, as the number of weapons is reduced eventually to zero, how do we assure ourselves against possible cheaters? These types of questions highlight the importance of a combined diplomatic and scientific approach to help scope out alternative public policies.

Countries might consider ways of promoting this kind of diplomatic/scientific collaboration. I had my own bit of education during my time in office. More recently, I have asked myself if I could have organized the conferences held at the Hoover Institution on my own. The answer is no. Could scientists have done so by themselves? I doubt it. There is simply no substitute for interaction between diplomats and scientists. Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation, as an example, has a long and productive history of putting physicists, biologists, and social scientists together to work at tough problems. Sid Drell, who is here today, co-founded this organization 25 years ago, and Scott Sagan, one of the current co-directors, is here today. Scott is an eminent political scientist, and his co-director, Siegfried Hecker, is a materials scientist who was formerly the director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

There is still another side to achieving the steps that are needed. There are seemingly intractable problems around the world, and some of these tensions may lead the parties involved to turn to nuclear weapons. Examples are the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the dispute over Kashmir, all-too-many areas of conflict in Africa, and the problem of Northern Ireland, until recently considered intractable.

One way to classify problems is to put them in two piles: problems you can solve and problems that seem insoluble. In the construction business, for example, if someone asks you to build a bridge from A to nearby B, you can solve the problem. If someone asks you to create a construction site free of accidents, you can put up guardrails and other safety devices, but the minute you think that the problem is solved, you've lost. The issue is all about attitudes. You have to realize that the problem is not soluble but needs constant attention and work. With that approach, you have a way to minimize or maybe even eliminate accidents.

Some of the most intractable international issues are like the second class of problems. Palestinians and Israelis claim the same land and so play a zero-sum game. Anyone can write down a solution on paper, but the answer goes deeper. You have to work at the problem all the time and be willing to take on possibilities, not just probabilities. Constant attention can keep the situation

from deteriorating and, eventually, an accommodation might emerge, as in Northern Ireland. We should ask, when considering our work on any problem, and specifically on the problems presented by nuclear weapons: Are these rules being applied and, if not, why not? To paraphrase Teddy Roosevelt, even if you have a big stick, speak softly, firmly, and in a manner that will be sustained by the evolution of facts, and remember that surprises always lie down the road, especially for those who are complacent.

The **third guidepost** is the development of support in key and powerful constituencies in country after country. Obviously, in the end, heads of government are the essential leaders in this effort. In the Hoover Institution – Nuclear Threat Initiative approach, we have endeavored to cast the issue as *non*partisan rather than bipartisan. We realize that there are plenty of issues to argue about, but we urge that they be discussed on their merits without somehow being mired in partisan divides. So far, we have been successful, and I am glad to say, as an example, that three-fourths of the former Secretaries of State, Secretaries of Defense, and National Security Advisers alive today, Democrats and Republicans, have supported our efforts. I am glad to add that even those who have not signed on to the ultimate goal agree that many of the steps are desirable. I am heartened by the positions taken recently by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and I note that the current Defense Minister and the

Foreign Minister in the predecessor government made similar comments. Prime Minister Gordon Brown recently said:

> And let me say today: Britain is prepared to use our expertise to help determine the requirements for the verifiable elimination of nuclear warheads. And I pledge that in the run-up to the Nonproliferation Treaty review conference in 2010 we will be at the forefront of the international campaign to accelerate disarmament amongst possessor states, to prevent proliferation to new states, and to ultimately achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons.

I also attach great importance to a speech before the Plenary Session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on February 12 this year by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov. Referring to our essays in the *Wall Street Journal*, he said that we "argued in a convincing manner in favor of the need to continue nuclear disarmament," and he noted that these ideas are "in line with Russia's initiatives, though there are, of course, aspects that call for further discussion in seeking agreement on specific ways of resolving these not that simple tasks."

The fact that the government of Norway is the official sponsor of this conference and that outstanding individuals from a variety of countries are present is building this momentum of support. The effort must continue and must reach out to other continents because all the issues are global in nature.

Finally, there's the problem of **timing**. How do you know when the moment has arrived to make a push? My own guess is that once a process is started and gains support, momentum will be built. The support of the UN's processes will be helpful and important. I believe also that success in such an undertaking will have highly desirable side consequences. People throughout the world will heave a sigh of relief. They will be able to say to themselves, "There are leaders in this world with the capacity to deal with difficult problems." Maybe other problems, such as climate change, can fall into line. Free of nuclear weapons, the world will be safer and saner in every respect.

I have said that my paper is entitled "The Age of Diplomacy" and I have tried to identify the great variety of important diplomatic tasks that lie ahead. Here are five undertakings that every country should consider:

1. The issues involved here are of transcendent importance, so the chief diplomats must be the heads of government. This is their issue. A key task is to help them exercise their awesome responsibilities.

2. Foreign ministers should expect to be at the center of organizing this effort, expecting, of course, to work in tandem with ministers of defense and others. That means these ministries need to be as strong as possible. Young people should be encouraged to take careers in the foreign service. Broad training is essential, particularly in the ability to work with technological issues and scientific people. Ways must be devised to retain seasoned officers and to engage senior people with political backgrounds.

3. The principal diplomatic task is the work within each country so that key constituencies are brought on board, kept informed, and made a part of this process.

4. A capacity needs to be developed so that scientists and diplomats learn to work together on issues. When they do so successfully, they will experience the thrill of learning important things about areas with which they normally have little contact.

5. Finally, work must be undertaken, right from the outset, on a global scale. When I was in office and dealing with members of Congress, I learned that one of the rules of the road is: If you want me with you on the landing, be sure I'm with you on the take-off.

Mr. Foreign Minister, you have convened a conference on an issue of transcendent importance. Your timing is propitious, since current trends are toward an increase in the danger from nuclear weapons. That trend must and can be turned around. Support is building. Do-able steps toward the goal of a world without nuclear weapons have been identified. Attainment of the goal is a real possibility. Let us take the steps needed to turn possibility into reality.