The Next 25 Years

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I am deeply grateful to the Agency and its leadership for inviting me to this vitally important international gathering. I hope my few words do not disappoint. My presentation is my responsibility alone and does not represent the thinking of the American delegation nor of the government of the United States.

Preparing for this talk, I re-read a book I had contributed to 25 years ago, *The Future of Conflict in the 1980s*, published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Despite some useful observations about war and strategy, this book got it completely wrong. In fact, ten years after the 1982 publication date of this study, it was largely obsolete.

Among the major international developments the book failed to foresee were: The collapse of the Warsaw Pact; the re-unification of Germany; the collapse of the Soviet Union; the rise of the European Union; majority rule in South Africa; the transformation of China; the disappearance of chemical and biological weapons from most states' arsenals; globalization; and global Warming.

In the nuclear arena, the study did not foresee the dramatic reductions in nuclear weapons that slashed arsenals from a 1986 high of 65,000 hydrogen bombs to today's 26,000. Nor did it predict the end of the nuclear weapons programs in Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Iraq and Libya. In fact, the authors would have been stunned today to find that more countries have given up nuclear weapon and programs over the past 25 years then have tried to acquire them. They would have been similarly surprised to learn that there are fewer countries today with ballistic missiles or programs than there were 20 years ago. Instead, the proliferation chapter predicted, as almost every proliferation chapter has for the past 40 years, that the end of that decade would see another nation join Israel as a Middle East nuclear weapon state. It did not happen.

We should not be too hard on these past prophets. As the great American expert, Yogi Berra, said, it's tough to make predictions, especially about the future.

Rather, it should be a sober reminder that while we may be able to discern broad trends, we cannot predict specific developments. With that in mind, let me offer four trends that I believe will condition our world over the next 25 years.

A More Balanced World

First, is the relative and absolute decline of American power. We must be realistic. No great nation, even one as great as the United States of America, can squander one trillion dollars of its treasury, the health and lives of tens of thousands of its finest warriors, half of the fighting equipment of its army and marines, and the immeasurable wealth of the world's respect and admiration in the pursuit of an unnecessary war, and come out stronger.

American power—diplomatic, economic, cultural and military—will still play a leading role in world affairs over the next quarter century. But it will have to leverage that power more than it has in the recent past and will be in greater need of the support of other states to achieve its objectives. American power will be complimented and challenged by the rise of new power centers in the European Union, China, India, perhaps Russia and perhaps other regions. It will be a more balanced world than that of ten years ago, and a more multi-lateral world than the two superpower world of 25 years ago.

That is why all nations, currently strong and currently weak, must work to build a world of laws, a world governed by international conventions that are fair, balanced and mutually beneficial. No nation can predict where they will be on the power spectrum 25 years from now. It is in the interest of all that the interests of all be protected.

A Warmer World

The fact of global warming caused by human activity can no longer be denied. The need for urgent action can no longer be delayed. It is highly likely that in ten years global warming will be the number one national security threat for many nations, perhaps for all.

Nuclear power may play a role in preventing the worst of the global warming scenarios. But not the way it is currently structured. In addition to the serious problems of cost, safety and waste, the nuclear industry has failed to solve the proliferation problem of nuclear power. Thus the two great moral and technological challenges of humankind are joined. Global Warming and Nuclear Proliferation are the only two human-made problems that can destroy most life on Earth. Both can be reversed, but in our desire to prevent one, we cannot exacerbate the other. We must make the world safe for nuclear power. It is grossly irresponsible to proceed with the construction of dozens of new reactors that will require many new uranium enrichment facilities—and, if some have their way, plutonium production facilities—thus bring many new states to the brink of nuclear weapons capability. This is a recipe for disaster. We must finally implement the complete and thorough reform of the fuel cycle proposed at the very beginning of the nuclear age and every decade since. Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and others

have solid proposals for how to do this; they must become an integral and mandatory part of any "nuclear renessaince."

A World With Fewer Wars

The third trend is the intensification of the forces of globalization. One does not have to be a fan of Thomas Friedman to recognize the essential truth that technology, money, jobs, and information now spread around the world at the speed of light. Global markets and global politics will be bound together even more tightly over the next 25 years. While analysts have been watching this trend for over a century and predicting that it would make conflict less economically attractive, this trend is more powerful now than ever. This calculation, coupled with the sobering conclusion of the Iraq War—that there is no such thing as a "slam dunk" war—will likely lead to the continuing decrease in wars and war deaths.

This trend is already underway. While we are bombarded daily with images of wars around the world, the fact is that war is in decline. IN the first half of the twntieth century wars killed over 100 million human beings; in the second half, only 20 million suffered a similar fate. The fear of wars going nuclear played a significant restraining hand, but the decline of wars and war deaths as continued with the end of the Cold War,. The 2005 *Human Security Report*, published by Oxford University Press, documents a 40 percent decline in regional conflicts from 1992 to 2003. The report noted that there was an 80 percent decline in both the deadliest conflicts—those with 1,000 or more battle deaths—and in the number of genocides and other mass slaughters of civilians. How did this happen? Andrew Mack, the director of the project, says

> "In the late 1980s, Washington and Moscow stopped fueling 'proxy wars' in the developing world, and the United Nations was liberated to play the global security role its founders intended. Freed from the paralyzing stasis of Cold War geopolitics, the Security Council initiated an unprecedented, though sometimes inchoate, explosion of international activism designed to stop ongoing wars and prevent new ones."

As this record of success becomes more widely recognized, it may become possible to convince national leaders to devote more effort to resolving the conflicts in Korea, South Asia, and the Middle East. Some of these will continue to rage out of control, but resolution of otheres may come more quickly than most imagine. Here, the example of Northern Ireland where leaders who once called each other "terrorist" now share power, is a powerful model for the value of committed and persistent diplomacy.

Thus, despite the divisive forces of religious fundamentalism and great power aggrandizement, the next twenty-five years may well see the past unification of Germany and Vietnam matched by the future unification of Korea and possible of China and Taiwan. The divisions created by the chaos of World War II may finally be healed.

No doubt resolving other conflicts will take more time, but as history teaches us,

it is the direction in which we are moving that informs national attitudes and shapes each state's security decisions. The more arrows we can get pointed in the right direction, the easier it becomes to make progress on all fronts.

A World with New Ideas

Finally, there is the subjective factor. There is nothing automatic about history. Policy matters. Indeed, if we were to simply continue our current policies it is highly likely that we will face a more dire future, one in which we would be likely to experience a catastrophic nuclear explosion. Former secretary of defense William Perry, for example, places the odds of a nuclear terrorist attack at 50-50 over the next ten years, while Harvard University expert Graham Allison believes it practically inevitable given current policies. South Asia remains the area of the world most likely to see a nuclear weapon used in combat. And the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, including the thousands of hydrogen bombs the United States and Russia keep on hair-trigger alert ready to launch in under 15 minutes, remains unacceptably high. Meanwhile, certain policies undermine nonproliferation standards long championed by the United States and others, most pointedly the US-India nuclear deal that appears to violate Article One of the Non-Proliferation Treaty by encouraging and assisting India's nuclear weapons program. Finally, a U.S. attack on Iran could plunge the region into chaos, the world into recession and actually accelerate Iranian nuclear efforts, not end them.

But I do not believe we will continue the current policies. Thus, there is nothing inevitable about this alternative, disastrous future. We make our own future. The next twenty-five years are ours to shape. There are now powerful political players moving to create new policies an with them a more secure world. Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei is certainly one of the leaders laboring for a safer, nuclear-free world. His ideas for a nuclear fuel bank, a nuclear-free Middle East, tougher inspections and for sharp reductions in nuclear arsenals are shaping policy proposals around the world.

In my own country, the next generation of political leaders is responding. Several leading candidates for the presidency of the United States have detailed sweeping proposals for nuclear security. Former Senator John Edwards promised last week that he would lead a charge for a "Global Compact" to eliminate nuclear weapons. Senator Barak Obama has pledged to eliminate and secure all loose nuclear materials in his first term as president, thereby virtually ending the prospect of nuclear terrorism. Senator Hillary Clinton has promised similar presidential attention to preventing nuclear terror and shrinking global arsenals.

All are propelled by the bipartisan appeal from Republicans George Shultz and Henry Kissinger and Democrats William Perry and Sam Nunn in their January 4, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* oped, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons." These four veteran cold warriors urged the United States to recommit to the vision of eliminating nuclear

weapons and married their vision with a ten-point action plan including steep reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the end to the production of nuclear weapons material. The four are sponsoring a conference at the conservative Hoover Institute at Stanford University in October to advance this agenda. There are over a dozen similar campaigns being organized in the United States.

Thus, it is with some confidence that I offer you my prediction that the pessimism and false starts of the past few years will be replaced by new, successful policies in the next decade and beyond. There is a new wind blowing. The next president of the United States—whether Republican or Democrat—will have a decidedly different nonproliferation policy than the radical, failed counterproliferation experiments of the past seven years.

The US president will not be alone. New leadership has and will take charge in major nations around the world, including, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Russia, Iran, and many others. The G8 conference photo in 2009 will likely not feature a single leader present for the 2006 photo. All these new executives are looking for new policies to make their mark on the world stage. Change is coming. And with it, the prospect of greater cooperation and greater security.

This is a vision now shared by liberals, moderates and many conservatives in America. Former U.S. State Department official Robert Einhorn and former Defense Department official Kurt Campbell note that the wisdom of societies and states that have gone without nuclear weapons is reinforced by "a world in which the goals of the NPT are being fulfilled—where existing nuclear arsenals are being reduced, parties are not pursuing clandestine nuclear programs, nuclear testing has been stopped, the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is being strengthened, and in general, the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs is diminishing."

There is every reason to believe that in the first half of the 21st Century the peoples and nations of the world will come to see nuclear weapons as the "historic accident" Mohamed ElBaradei says they are. It may become clearer that nations have no need for the vast destructive force contained in a few kilograms of enriched uranium or plutonium.

These weapons still appeal to national pride but they are increasingly unappealing to national budgets and military needs. It took us sixty-two years to get to this point in the nuclear road. If enough national leaders decide to walk the path together, it should not take another sixty to get to a safer, better world.

Joseph Cirincione is the author of *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (Columbia University Press, 2007), *Deadly Arsenals: Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Threats* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, second edition, 2005) and over 200 articles on national security issues.