

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
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I want to thank Marlene Johnson and welcome her back to Minnesota. As many of you know, Marlene served this state with great distinction as its Lt. Governor for almost ten years. Now she is serving NAFSA equally well.

Look at this convention – more delegates than ever before. Marlene, the credit is yours. You have built this association of international educators at the very moment that higher education and our nation need it most.

Marlene once served on the Board of Trustees of AFS International, the world's largest exchange program for young people of high school age. I am proud today to serve as Chairman of that Board. Our charismatic President, Francisco Tachi Cazal, is here with us today as well.

Just a few weeks ago, we launched a petition drive at the Nobel Peace Prize Center in Oslo, Norway. This petition calls on world leaders to offer more support to youth exchange and intercultural learning as a path to world peace. Several international exchange programs have joined this effort, including NAFSA.

All of us who have had an intercultural experience know how powerful and life-changing that experience can be. Today, only a small percentage of the world's population can have that experience. Just imagine the impact if we were able to give every one of our young people an intercultural experience before they left college. War would certainly be a less desirable option!

Our petition is short, but to the point. It reads:

“We, the undersigned, know that peace and justice require that we extend the hand of friendship across borders, cultures and religions and that knowledge and understanding are needed to nurture these friendships. The nations of the world can promote peace by helping the world's youth build these friendships. Therefore we call upon the world's leaders to enable young people everywhere to live and study in cultures other than their own by significantly expanding youth exchange programs. Friendship leads to understanding. Understanding leads to peace. We call on all to grasp this opportunity.”

Our hope is to collect one million- plus signatures by October. Your convention packets contain the information you need to join this effort. Sign on before you leave Minneapolis and refer your colleagues to exchanges4peace.org.

I have great respect for this audience. You are the advisors, the advocates and the leaders for intercultural learning in higher education. So, in a sense, I am preaching to the choir. All I can hope for is that I can stimulate the choir to sing louder and with one voice.

Whether you are American citizens, or citizens of other nations, these are deeply troubling times for those of us who want to see the United States act, as it has so often in the past, as a leader for peace and understanding. We were a superpower whose exceptionalism led our government to promote the United Nations, the Bretton Woods organizations, the human rights movement, the democratic revolution and humanitarianism itself. There was always the risk that exceptionalism mixed with hubris could take us in a very different direction. And it has.

Today, the United States suffers the hostility of many from other nations. The US government is being called to account by old friends and new foes who resent its unilateral effort to impose its will. Even as we begin to see the US State Department attempt to move back toward more accommodating positions, we suffer the hangover of policies that were based on the imposition of raw power. Never in our history has anti-Americanism been such a powerful reality in the international community.

In a recent lecture for the DACOR organization (made up of retired diplomats), former Ambassador Charles Freeman put it this way:

We are now known internationally more for our recalcitrance than our vision. We have sought to exempt ourselves from the jurisdiction of international law... We no longer participate in the UN body charged with the global promotion of human rights. We decline to discuss global climate change, nuclear disarmament, or the avoidance of arms races in outer space. If we have proposals for a world more congenial to the values we espouse, we no longer articulate them. The world is a much less promising place for our silence and absence.

What can we do to reverse this sad state of affairs? There is no easy answer, but as informed citizens, as leaders in higher education, we can play a role. For one thing, we can demand that the current crop of presidential candidates acknowledge our sad present-day reality and tell us what they plan to do about it.

In my view, the answer is most certainly not more of the same aggressive unilateralism. Neither is it to turn our back on the world and the role we have played traditionally in promoting the rule of law, human rights and democracy.

One answer lies in the mission this organization espouses. Intercultural understanding has gone missing from our inter-governmental discourse.

It is time to listen to the perspectives of other great societies and traditions. Leadership requires followers. It cannot be imposed. Our policy positions in this world, if they are to have merit, must be informed by the international community, by societies and individuals who have different histories, cultures, religions and languages.

Alexander Hamilton said it well over 200 years ago: “An attention to the judgment of other nations is important to every government for two reasons: the one is, that, independently of the merits of any particular plan...,it is desirable, on various accounts, that it should appear to other nations as the offspring of a wise and honorable policy; the second is, that in doubtful cases, particularly where the national councils may be warped by some strong passion or momentary interest, the presumed or known opinion of the impartial world may be the best guide that can be followed.” In other words, only when we listen to the discourse of others do we avoid huge mistakes and succeed in effectively pursuing our own values and interests.

This is the reality of the earth we live on, and military power cannot erase it. We live in a world where more nations are governed by democratic means than ever before. These governments and their leaders are legitimate in the eyes of their own people. Our goal should be to find common ground with these nations on the big issues of the day.

Listen to the words of professional diplomat John Kiesling in his book Diplomacy Lessons:

Humans believe in leadership and leaders. They also believe in character and personal relationships. There is thus one small but useful way that a U.S. President’s legitimacy can translate into power to affect foreign domestic politics: the art of friendship. A politician who obeys the dictates of a hostile superpower is toast. A politician involved in a reciprocal friendship, perceived by his own population as genuine, can offer generous gestures to a superpower...and be proud for it.

Whatever your perception of Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, too many of his countrymen and women have perceived him as obeying “the dictates of a hostile superpower.” However he tries to write the history of his relationship with President Bush, his exit from power was most likely precipitated by a perception that their friendship was not reciprocal, to say nothing of the policies they pursued together.

Diplomacy in an era when our closest allies must respond to the impulses of democratic polities requires deftness, political acumen and subtlety. Rhetoric matters. Hubris coming from the remaining superpower is so much louder to the ears of foreign audiences than it is to American ears. Those of us who have had an intercultural learning experience know this.

Many in this audience from other nations may wish they could vote for the American president. This is not necessarily because they wish to change nationalities. Rather, it is because they know that American presidents can influence their lives, for better or for worse.

What then should we look for in a presidential candidate? How do we reach conclusions about maturity and character, and the potential to lead in this complex world? I have a few suggestions:

Suggestion one: listen to their analyses of global issues. Listen to the way they characterize the challenges the world faces.

Most political leaders like to personalize threats to our national wellbeing. Thus, you will hear much about the world's evil personalities, the terrorists or the leaders of the rogue states, like Iran or North Korea. Some will look with fear to a future when we may be challenged by an emerging superpower, like China.

Direct threats to our security are legitimate concerns and they deserve the attention of serious national security thinkers—so long as we do not succumb entirely to fear and then create negative self-fulfilling prophecies. China is a good example: Because of its growing wealth and its large population, China, the doomsday thinkers would say, has the potential to be an enemy; therefore, we must prepare for this potential threat; then, as we prepare for the worst, China becomes our enemy.

We need not accept that prophecy. If we can find common ground with China through engagement and intercultural exchange—as many of our universities are now doing-- we can develop the seeds of enduring respect and lasting friendship.

Another dimension of analysis we should look for is an expressed awareness that conditions on the ground matter. Yes, evil groups and governments represent dangers, but these dangers are multiplied many fold in the presence of growing and pervasive poverty.

Poverty is a condition we have ignored far too long. At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, the ratio of rich to poor countries based on per capita incomes was about one to six. Today, it is one to fifty! Almost half the world's population lives in poverty.

This is a dangerous condition, and it matters. Poverty spawns infectious disease, destroys nature and undermines the human spirit. Sociologists who have studied inner cities in the United States tell us that “alienation, exploitation and dependency wrought by resource deprivation acts as a centrifugal force that stymies collective efficacy.” In other words, social cohesion and any prospect for achieving a stable society are lost. These sociologists also concluded that the greater the resource deprivation is, the stronger the correlation to the level of violence. This analysis applies to global poverty as well.

In our world of instant communication, resource deprivation – the gap between rich and poor – is painfully obvious to the world's poor. Very few of this fast-growing segment of the world population will become terrorists, but a few terrorists can do great damage. Others will become refugees and displaced people, moving from unstable regions to stable ones. Many will carry disease across borders. Others will engage in violent activities in support of their religion, ethnic group or nation.

There is a debate going on in foreign policy circles over whether we should strive for a more democratic world, or, alternatively, for a more stable world. Whatever your own

view on this issue, we should all embrace a renewed commitment to mitigate the effects of poverty. Both ends—stability and democracy-- are served in pursuing that objective.

The solution will not rest alone with the mobilization of foreign aid resources. It will be found in more effective cooperation with developing countries, better coordination within and among donor governments and more coherence among our international economic, trade and development policies.

It does little good, for example, for the West to spend one billion dollars a year to help poor countries develop agriculture, while spending one billion dollars a day subsidizing our own agricultural products. That is what we are doing according to last year's UNDP Human Development Report. Poor countries just cannot compete. Only an immense expression of effective presidential leadership will overcome the political obstacles to saner trade policies.

Suggestion two: listen to the candidates' rhetoric. Are they exploiting our fears to gain our votes? Are they aware of the impact of words on foreign audiences?

Phrases like "make my day" are entertaining when Clint Eastwood speaks them. When a president utters these words, other nations get ready for the worst. Sometimes they even build nuclear weapons in response!

It is time to reassure our friends and our foes. There should be no doubt that America will act to protect itself no matter who is president, even acting preemptively in the face of imminent hostilities. Yet, presidents and candidates put us at risk when they outdo themselves to announce to the world that the United States has a hair trigger on its conventional and strategic weapons.

Teddy Roosevelt's admonition is still a wise one. Today the emphasis should be on speaking softly. Our big stick has been amply advertised in the past six years!

Suggestion three: the next president should take seriously the need to reform the United Nations. For too long we have played politics with its weaknesses. We have ridiculed the UN, blamed it for our failures and refused to compromise to make it stronger. I think it is ironic, given the well-advertised weaknesses of the UN, that right-wing ideologues portray the institution as a threat to our sovereignty.

Even in the Administration in which I served –the Clinton Administration – we held back the payments of our dues. We were forced to do this by Congress, but still, the major reform we sought was to lower our payment obligation, which only further weakened the UN. In doing so – and in succeeding – we spent diplomatic capital that should have been used to advance real reform.

A US administration whose goal is to strengthen international law, prevent conflict, promote development and build the peace in war-torn countries will need an effective United Nations. Internal UN reform that gives more authority to the Secretary General to

manage resources, streamlines the budget process, makes the Security Council more inclusive and strengthens peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace- building capacity will benefit the United States and contribute to global peace.

The United Nations is not a sovereign power whose purposes are alien to the United States, as some would have us believe. It is an indispensable meeting place for nations, the only vehicle we have for legitimizing international law, a potential instrument of collective security and peacekeeping, and a moral force for human rights and development cooperation.

The United States is the strongest power on the Security Council. It is time to use leadership and diplomacy to create an international organization capable of performing effectively in the 21st century.

My fourth and final suggestion is that you listen carefully when the candidates discuss national security.

They all will want to sound tough. They all will praise our military forces, as they should. The question is, “how will they use these forces?” Will they be smart as well as tough?

Starting a war in a country that is not a threat to the United States is not smart. Placing military forces in a situation where sectarian conflict is inevitable is not smart. Asking our military to use conventional means to fight terrorists who constitute an asymmetrical threat in hostile environments about which we know little is not smart.

US military forces are the most effective in the world, but even they cannot win when the enemy can retreat into the civilian society, hunker down and wait for a better day. Even they cannot win when there is no will for a political solution and no effective diplomacy to bring it about.

I would also be skeptical of a candidate who says that our objective is to “win the war on terrorism.” Recall that in the last election both President Bush and Senator Kerry committed the truth when they admitted that it would be difficult to “win” against the terrorists. They quickly backed off their statements after they were attacked for sounding like defeatists.

Yet, they were just being realists. There will be no final victory over terrorism. There will always be fanatical people in this world prepared to harm innocent people for their cause.

Our goal should be to see this threat in proportion, to protect ourselves as best we can and then to marginalize the threat. What we must avoid is taking actions that play directly into the hands of the terrorists. Our war of choice in Iraq has done just that. It has multiplied the terrorist forces arrayed against us. That is not just my conclusion. That is the conclusion of the US intelligence community.

It may be too much to expect our political leaders to use a word like “marginalize” in lieu of “win,” but perhaps we can hope they would avoid the word “war.” That word has both a legal and political meaning. It implies a conflict between nations. The use of the word elevates the terrorists far beyond a status they have earned. They are, after all, common criminals, murderers and fanatics. They do not deserve the title “enemy combatant.”

Conjuring a “war” that never was also has produced an irrational fear that has compromised our national values. We Americans pride ourselves on our open society, our adherence to legal procedure and due process, and our individual freedoms. We have imprisoned people without due process, wire tapped Americans without appropriate court approval and closed our borders to too many innocent students seeking an education.

One can argue that these measures have protected the homeland. I would suggest that Americans have great pride, not in a homeland per se, but in the values that make that homeland special. We have allowed the terrorists to intimidate us into becoming something we are not. Ambassador Freeman said it well: “Quite aside from the fact that absolute security is absolutely impossible, this is not who we were. It is not who most of us want to be.”

In February of this year, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that “security concerns cannot be used...to excuse procedures that do not conform to the fundamental justice.” The Court carefully considered the tradeoffs between a government’s fundamental responsibility to ensure the security of its citizens and its constitutional obligation to act accountably to protect defendants’ rights. They concluded that due process and governmental accountability did not compromise security.

Today, in Guantanamo, Cuba, hundreds of alleged terrorists are held without due process; many have been there for several years. These people are not told why they are being held; the evidence against them is classified. This miscarriage of justice is badly damaging the reputation of our country all over the world.

Abraham Lincoln said, “America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter, and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.” If we fail to reject the politics of fear, we risk losing all that we hold dear.

Why is it that Canada and the European nations—some under a more immediate threat than we are—can preserve their constitutional freedoms and fight terrorism at the same time? Why are we so much less confident that our judicial system can preserve our security?

That same attitude led us down a path toward torture in both Guantanamo and Iraq. The chain of command has never been held accountable for what we now know happened at Abu Ghraib. Once again, the reputation of the United States suffered badly as a result of these revelations.

We should welcome the statement our Iraq field commander General Petraeus issued to his troops on May 10. He warned against the natural temptations that accompany warfare and said, in part, “In everything we do, we must observe the standards and values that dictate that we treat noncombatants and detainees with dignity and respect. While we are warriors, we are also human beings.”

Had Secretary Rumsfeld spent as much time sending this kind of message as he did in looking for exceptions to the Geneva Conventions, we might have avoided Abu Ghraib!

Is it possible for a presidential candidate to be at once tough and smart? Can we strike a balance between security and fundamental values?

Combating terrorism successfully will require solid intelligence cooperation, good police work, scrutiny of banking arrangements to prevent the laundering of funds, and diplomatic negotiations to bring about enhanced cooperation. According to the last Anti-Terrorism chief at the State Department, at best, twenty-percent of the solution involves our conventional military forces. Yet, we continue to starve our civilian assets—including intelligence, diplomacy and development—while spending almost \$500 billion on our military. This is insane. It is counterproductive.

What can those of us in higher education do? How can we make a difference?

We have seen foreign students fall away from our rolls since 9/11. Improved visa procedures have helped, but the new reality is that universities in Europe and Asia have become much more competitive. Anti-Americanism has not helped. We have a stake in a return to international engagement.

Effective internationalism is based on intercultural understanding. It does not mean remaking the world in our image. It means engagement, accommodation, compromise. We have been trying it the other way for too long and the failure of this unilateral approach is deeply painful to all of us.

One of my colleagues suggested that our rallying cry should be: “educators of the world unite!” I don’t think so. That line and the philosophy behind it never helped the workers of the world!! Let me try to appeal to your pride and to the better side of your nature.

Each of you here today has earned the respect of society. You have important insights that enable you to be integrative leaders within your communities, bringing the generations together around global issues and defining a common purpose.

Perhaps today you will sign a petition for intercultural learning and peace. Perhaps tomorrow you will organize your community to take steps to curb the emission of

greenhouse gasses. Perhaps the next day you will even convince your government that it is time to end a misbegotten war!

It is time for all of us to become more active citizen leaders in the cause of enlightened internationalism. As educators and citizens of this world you are well positioned to challenge presidential candidates—and anyone else who presumes to want to lead us-- to seek solutions through international cooperation.

So, NAFSA delegates go forward and lead. Speak loudly with a single and enlightened voice for world peace and understanding. Thank you.