

Center for American Progress



THE
CENTURY
FOUNDATION

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

**“AMERICA IN THE WORLD: FORGING A NEW VISION
FOR FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY.”**

CLOSING REMARKS:

**SAMUEL R. BERGER, FORMER NATIONAL SECURITY
ADVISER TO PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON**

**5:15 PM – 5:30 PM
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MR. JOSEPH CIRINCIONE: We are now fortunate enough to have a closing speaker who has graciously agreed to help us make some sense of today's proceedings, to sum this up for us, and to offer his own perspectives.

Right before I introduce him, I want to remind everybody in the audience that we're going to have transcripts of this discussion posted on the Center for American Progress website, americanprogress.org. We're going to have video highlights of the conference posted. And you'll be able to go online tonight and see some of the comments from some of the bloggers who have been here. We've had some of the best national security bloggers in the United States here, including some from the *Nation*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the National Security Network, the *American Prospect*, and a half a dozen others.

You may think that you already know everything you need know about our next speaker, Samuel R. Berger, the 19th national security advisor to the president of United States. You may know that Sandy Berger worked for the former mayor of New York City, John Lindsay, and for former Senator Harold Hughes, or that he was deputy director of the State Department's Policy Planning staff. You may know that he headed the international trade group of the Washington law firm of Hogan and Hartson and that in 1993 he became deputy national security advisor for President Bill Clinton and then in 1997 was appointed to become the national security advisor when Tony Lake left the government; or that after leaving government, he founded and became chairman of the international advisory firm, Stonebridge International and, apropos of today's discussion, that as he is now the chairman of the international investment fund, DB Zwirn Global Advisory Group and he manages more than \$4 billion in capital assets.

But did you know that before he got his juris doctorate from Harvard Law School in 1971, before he got his BA from Cornell University in 1967 that Sandy Berger was the member of a secret society: the Quill and Dagger – a Cornell secret society that is the rival of Yale's Skull and Bones and that counts among its members Paul Wolfowitz and Stephen Hadley – (laughter) – the current and 21st national security advisor to the president of United States. Coincidence? Hmm.

There are still many skills and connections yet to be revealed about Sandy Berger, but this we know: on matters of national security, he brings us insight formed from long experience, wisdom from years of study, and humanity based on unwavering dedication to American democracy.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you, ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Samuel R. Berger.

(Applause.)

MR. SAMUEL R. BERGER: Thank you, Joe. That is certainly the most conspiratorial introduction I have ever had. I had forgotten I was a member of Quill and Dagger until Joe reminded me. It is hardly a secret society. And you've violated the basic code by revealing some of its members.

It's been a rich day of thought and discussion, and I want to commend the Center for American Progress and the Century Foundation for pulling this timely discussion together. My job is to try to bring together some of the major themes and ideas that we have heard during the day.

It's been a long day, so let me offer some short closing remarks on what I believe will be the greatest National Security challenges that the new president, whoever she or he may be, will face when they walk in the Oval Office – I would argue the most daunting set of challenges to be faced by any president since Franklin Roosevelt.

The first – and this underlies a lot of what has been said here today – is to restore respect for American leadership globally. Virtually every problem discussed today requires the act of participation of partners around the world. And cooperation for the common good doesn't just happen, it takes leadership to pull it together. The United States is uniquely well placed to assume that leadership role by virtue of our military, economic, and political strength and the enduring values that define us.

But we cannot compel other nations to follow. To lead, we must inspire. And to do that, we need to replenish the moral authority that has been lost over the last six years, squandered in part through America's misadventure in Iraq, in part through neglect of our allies and disregard for international norms, in part for having walked away from the global community's common agenda – the Kyoto treaty, the International Criminal Court, toughening the Biological Weapons Convention – in part through our failure to lead on issues that matter most to the world, things like promoting peace in places like the Middle East, which we heard discussed earlier; protecting the environment; combating global poverty.

In many places in Africa, Asia, and Latin America we simply are absent; not so much despised as irrelevant. Restoring respect for American leadership must be the new president's paramount priority. Doing so will require an enlightened definition of our self-interest, one that takes into account the needs and perspective of others and recognizes that America must part of, not apart from, the world community.

The second challenge is combating the threat of jihadist extremism. For the past six years, we have met this challenge with the tools and terminology of war. In the process, we've played straight into the hands of al Qaeda and its self-serving narrative of an imperialist, anti-Islamic America. Clearly, Iraq will be a challenge for the next president regardless of what happens between now and then, but Iraq was not a hotbed of terrorism before we made it one. When it comes to jihadist extremism, our nation needs to implement a smarter strategy. Yes, one that intensifies the intelligence, policing, and internal security measures that will root out terrorist cells, but also one that denies al Qaeda and their ilk the fertile climate in which to grow.

Such a strategy means working with our friends to advance an empowerment agenda in the Muslim world, helping create opportunity societies where young people chose life over death. In doing so, we can cut off the oxygen that terrorists need to

survive – the tolerance of neighbors and fellow citizens that see no better alternative. In combination with our broader efforts to champion humanities common agenda, we can reframe the post-September 11 narrative with the extremists isolated instead of us.

The third challenge is to halt the spread of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. For a time, it seemed as though history's pendulum was swinging against nuclear weapons, as countries from Brazil to South of Africa to Ukraine gave up their weapons programs. But today the threat of a nuclear nightmare is growing more real.

We need a comprehensive strategy to deal with this urgent threat, one that focuses on securing nuclear materials; restoring the Nonproliferation Treaty based upon a new bargain with civilian nuclear powers; hard-nosed diplomacy, as Senator Smith talked about earlier today, with Iran and also with North Korea to end their nuclear programs; and bold new moves by the nuclear powers – including us – along the lines of what Bill Perry and George Shultz and others have proposed, to reduce the size of our own nuclear arsenals.

The forth challenge, as we've heard discussed today, is managing China's rising power on the global stage. The scope of China's transformation is nothing short of stunning – economic growth that has averaged almost 10 percent for the last three decades. Hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens lifted from poverty – foreign direct investment flows that rival the United States. Certainly, we must hold China to their rightful economic and political obligations, enforcing intellectual property rights and ending their coddling of Sudan. But if, more broadly, we create the perception that we are treating China like an emerging enemy, we will create a self-fulfilling prophecy. And as a result, we may find a world where American influence is eroding. Our role as a balancing (wheel?) for traditional rivalries in Asia diminishes and our economic and political interests suffer.

Finally, the next president must deal with the challenges of energy and climate change, a topic that CAP and this morning's panel have addressed in great detail. Put simply, our excessive dependence on oil presents a dual threat. It leaves us hostage to supplier states who may not share our interests and values and adds to the global warming that is jeopardizing life on this planet. If we could reduce the need for hydrocarbons and diversify the kinds and sources of our energy supply, it would be a big national security win and potentially an economic boom as well for the United States. This challenge will require depth and respectful U.S. diplomacy towards developing nations, recognizing they must share in the task, but in a way that enables them to grow and not be forced inordinately to shoulder the burden of our mistakes.

Which brings me back to where I began: the need to restore America's moral authority. That is the keystone on which our progress on all these other challenges must rest. I'll never forget the end of the Clinton administration when we went to Camp David for one last try at forging Middle East peace. We didn't know whether or not we would succeed, but we decided that we would give it everything we had. And as we flew to Camp David for what was destined to be a difficult summit, President Clinton turned to me and said, "We're going to make peace happen or we're going to get caught trying."

It's time for America to get caught trying to be a global leader again – a global leader that is as caring as it is strong, as humble as it is resolute, as good as it is great. Being with all of you today after the thoughtful discussions of the day, I'm confident that we can.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. CIRINCIONE: Thank you very much, Sandy. Thank you. Thank you for agreeing to speak. That was just terrific.

In the last minute of this conference, I just want to quickly thank John Podesta and Dick Leone and the generosity of our financial supporters and the enormously talented staff of the Center for American Progress, including Marlene Cooper Vasilic, Paige Fitzgerald, Victoria Suarez Palomo, and Sarah Wartell for their help in putting on this conference. And of course, of the Century Foundation including Jeff Laurenti, Carl Robichaud, Patrick Keith, Emerson Sykes, and Michael Shtender-Auerbach among others.

Thanks also to the conference coordinator, Peggy Cusack, and her staff from Rendezvous Consulting, and, most importantly, the one man who made this possible – our conference coordinator/conference director who did the most work, lost the most sleep, took the most grief, gave up his day job as director for international law and diplomacy at the Center for American Progress. I'm talking of course about Spencer Boyer. (Applause.) Thank you, Spencer Boyer.

(Applause.)

And thank you all for coming, for your patience, for your questions, for your insights. Go home. Godspeed.

(END)