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Returning to a Rational Foreign Policy

I believe that the world is ready — indeed eager — for the United States to return to its traditional pursuit of a foreign policy that is coherent, pragmatic, respectful and idealistic. Following 9/11, a broad coalition of nations — including many Muslim countries — joined the United States against Al Qaeda, and the Taliban in Afghanistan who harbored them. It was a promising moment.

Five years later American foreign policy is in tatters.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq has left us with few allies. A unilateral and belligerent approach to the world has left us dangerously isolated. Why does this matter? It matters because our national security and our economy are linked inseparably to the conduct of our foreign policy in a world made smaller and more challenging by globalization.

It matters because the US is capable of using and leveraging its foreign assistance wisely and efficiently to reduce the suffering of millions, and provide pathways to opportunities and better lives for many of the world's poorest citizens. The use of terrorism by various groups to advance their goals is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. The effort to contain this threat will be complicated and take a long time. And it can not be done alone.

Nuclear proliferation — including “loose nukes” — and a Mideast made even more unstable because of Iraq are serious threats. Global warming, a growing divide between rich and poor nations, genocide and HIV/AIDS are real issues that affect us all and require global responses.

How do we do address these and other critical international issues? By returning to the bipartisan foreign policy which guided presidents from Truman through Clinton. We must have allies, we must negotiate, we must listen. We must understand and accept that the differences which exist between peoples and cultures are not necessarily questions of right and wrong, us versus them.

I am confident that the election of a new President will be an important first step toward restoring America's positive and preeminent role in the world. His or her job will not be an easy one.

Many key issues and developments have been ignored by this Administration because of its obsession with Iraq and the continued attention its mismanagement has required. We must move quickly to rebuild relations with our traditional allies in Europe and the Pacific.

We must engage again with Asia, especially China, and with an increasingly restless Latin America. We must use our influence, resources and expertise to alleviate the suffering of millions who live on the African continent — before it is too late. The first step will be to end our disastrous involvement in Iraq. This will be welcomed by the American public, the Congress and most of the world community.