The U.S. in a 21st Century World
Do we have what it takes?
The U.S. in a 21st Century World: Do we have what it takes?

Moderated by Nicholas Burns

The second half of the twentieth century was a time of almost nonstop American ascendancy. In many ways, we are still ahead of much of the rest of the world, but storm clouds are gathering. We have become the world’s largest debtor nation. Our education system is producing students who rank just average, or even below, among other nations. Popular approval of our federal elected officials is at a record low, and the citizenry generally believes that Washington is broken and incapable of dealing with the serious issues we face. Do we have what it takes for the twenty-first century? The 2012 Camden Conference takes an introspective look at US competiveness in a rapidly changing global environment, along with our multiple domestic challenges—economic, political, and social.

Keynote Address ................................. William Richardson ................................. 1

The Challenging Future of America .................. Pete du Pont ................................. 3

What America Makes Will Make America ........ Clyde Prestowitz, Jr. ...................... 5


A Country Adrift: The United States to 2050 ........ Lawrence Wilkerson ...................... 9

Beyond Risk and Threat: The Need for a National Strategic Narrative ........ Wayne Porter and Mark Mykleby ............. 11

America’s Future Global Challenges ................. Nicholas Burns ................................. 12

US Education in a Global Context .................. Robert Schwartz ................................. 15

The Facebook Revolutions: How Arab Activists Used American Technology to Change the Middle East .......... Deborah Amos ...................... 17

Wrapping Up: Questions for All .................... 19

This year’s Camden Conference was dedicated to the 12 founders: Ellis Cohn, Lewis Conover, William Cross, John Foskett, Charles Fryer, Arthur Johnson, Julie (Levett) Canniff, Alexander MacKimm, Thomas Marx, Archie McRee, Harvey Picker, and Robert Tierney. Their vision, creativity, and high standards have guided all future Conferences. They have given us a great gift.
“Do we have what it takes?” Governor Richardson asked at the start of his presentation. While his answer was “yes,” it was a qualified one, noting that our success will take “dramatic leadership and boldness.” The initial hurdle we face is a domestic one—political gridlock. He said he had never seen the level of dysfunctionality in Washington that exists now. The reasons include the rise of cable networks and the resulting nonstop news broadcasts, as well as the incessant fundraising needed to pay for today’s increasingly expensive television ads. It’s a vicious circle: negativity raises money, and more television outlets “spewing negativity” attract more voters and more viewers.

Richardson recalled that when he was in Congress in the 1990s, “We didn’t all agree, but we all got along. Our families were there; we shared dinners.” Now, members of Congress are in Washington Tuesday to Thursday, commuting home every weekend, where their families remain, to raise money. They no longer know each other. Congressional inaction has become a major problem. No wonder Congress has an approval rating of 10 per cent.

Republicans have moved to the far right, outdoing each other to be the most conservative. The old, moderate Rockefeller Republicans, who worked in coalition with Democrats and who respected the old proverb that partisanship stops at the water’s edge, no longer exist. Foreign policy issues have now become partisan, even though President Obama’s foreign policy for the most part—Libya, the Afghanistan drawdown, nuclear reduction talks with Russia, an international coalition for sanctions against Iran—has been working.

Despite these successes, serious problems remain. The governor noted there are three areas of particular importance for US foreign policy today; the Arab Spring, the international economic system, and energy. With regard to the Arab Spring, which he described as “good for the world and for America,” it’s important that we attach ourselves to its goals and be part of it.

The key problem with the international economic system is that the institutions in place, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have not been re-examined since World War II. The system needs to evolve so that it focuses more on jobs, education, health care, economic inequality, and renewable energy, and less on its more traditional portfolio of debt and the financial infrastructure.

With regard to energy, the two current problems are the increased concern about nuclear safety as a result of the Fukushima disaster, and the ongoing use of oil as a political weapon. The rising price of oil is a problem for us, but it’s even worse for third-world economies. The world needs to move initially to a greater reliance on natural gas and, from there, to renewables.

Closer to home, a key challenge we face is immigration. Certainly we need to tighten our borders, but we also need to develop a realistic plan—and it must be a bipartisan one—to deal with the 12 million immigrants currently here illegally. Latin America is in our own backyard, and yet Iran’s Ahmadinejad—not us—has just visited Cuba, Ecuador, and...
Nicaragua, and Venezuela, hoping to expand markets there for Iran. We need fairer trade deals with Latin America; the Cuban embargo should be lifted. Some of the strong economies, such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, are great potential markets for the US. In Central America and Mexico, we need to encourage programs that, by providing jobs for the young there, would help reduce illegal immigration here.

Then there’s climate change, an area where the US has clearly not done enough. After this year’s elections, the issues of immigration and climate change must be addressed.

Other issues include terrorism, where we’ve made good strides, and nuclear proliferation, especially with regard to Iran and North Korea. We need to engage the North Koreans, realizing that China cannot force North Korea to do what we want. Dealing with Iran may be even harder.

Even as we focus on these serious issues, we must not neglect Africa, where poverty; disease, especially AIDS; and sexual trafficking are rampant. Worse, six wars are currently under way throughout the continent.

What do we need to help us meet these worldwide challenges? A new spirit of bipartisanship, says Governor Richardson. The upcoming elections, he predicted, will send a message that America is sick of inaction, and that if the two parties don’t straighten out, the growth of a third party is possible.

In the question-and-answer period, the Governor noted he’s talked recently to Chinese business leaders, who do not see the US as weak and failing; they want the US to show leadership. He also was optimistic about recent events in our economy, noting that while serious economic problems clearly remain, job growth is improving. The next Congress, he believes, should develop a 12- to 15-year plan based on the Bowles-Simpson approach, to encourage a mixture of spending cuts, job creation, and public/private partnership.

Responding to a question asking for further thoughts on North Korea, Richardson said he was not optimistic that North Korea would change any time soon, but that we must continue talking to them; making a deal to control their nuclear expansion in exchange for economic assistance is not impossible. He also re-emphasized that while China is a strategic competitor, it is not an enemy. With regard to resolving the Israel/Palestine problem, he stressed the necessity of the US continuing to play the key role. He also noted that an Israeli attack on Iran would not be beneficial and would certainly damage our position in the Middle East.

While Governor Richardson’s talk focused on the many challenges the US faces, both internally and externally, the session concluded on a positive note, in response to a university student’s question about what individuals could do: “Get involved; run for the student council, and later, get into politics. You can make a difference.”

*Reported by Mac Deford*
Governor du Pont began by expressing his conviction that the US is strong—but he qualified this assertion with his concern about the increasing size and expense of government. “In America today,” he said, “our policy is changing. It’s not the same policy we’ve had for a great many years.” Stating that the federal government is expanding “faster than we have ever seen it expand, in size, in cost, in reach,” he said that although some of the increased influence it has is good, he characterized much of its move to control state and local policy and programs as “questionable.” He summed up his point of view by saying, “We are really Europeanizing.” That is, like Europe, we are relinquishing more of what ought to be local responsibility to the national government.

The Governor cited three examples of how, in his estimation, state government has been influenced negatively by this expansion of federal authority. California has the largest deficit ever, higher taxation is on the way, and a huge regulatory program is continuing. According to du Pont, a state should not have to face these challenges. In Ohio last November, the public employees’ union power reduction advocated by the governor was defeated by a vote of 61 to 39—“very unusual.” This outcome reflects outside influence on a state’s internal affairs. In Wisconsin, union powers led a successful campaign to recall the governor. He will have to stand for re-election. Governor du Pont raised the question of how many, if any, governors have been recalled in America; this is a troubling trend.

Turning his attention to Washington, du Pont addressed three areas of problems. The first concern is the increase in government spending. The increase under President Bush I was 6.7 per cent per year. Under President Clinton, it was 3.3 per cent per year (lower because he had to work with a Republican-controlled House of Representatives for some of his tenure). Under President Bush II, the increase was 6.6 per cent per year, with total spending of $2.7 to $3 trillion per year. In President Obama’s first year in office, the spending came to $3.6 trillion, the same as the last year of World War II, 1945—in du Pont’s words, “a long time ago.” The public debt in 2011 has grown to 67.7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). “The whole government is getting bigger.”

A second problem is the increase in taxation. In 2009 the top 1 per cent of taxpayers paid 36.7 per cent of the taxes, the highest share; the bottom 90 per cent paid 29.5 per cent. This formula will probably change next January with an increase in taxes for the higher income brackets. One estimate states that a 1 per cent increase in taxes reduces the GDP by 2.5 to 3 per cent. Governor du Pont reflected on his service in Delaware, where his two predecessors (a Republican and a Democrat) raised taxes and spending to the point that the top taxes reached 19.8 per cent, the highest tax rate in the country. The state had the second-highest unemployment rate and the lowest credit rating of all 50 states. President Obama’s proposals advocate specific higher taxes to pay for increased spending. These changes must be scrutinized carefully. Delaware once took the same approach, but those two governors were not re-elected because “the entire economy was going to pieces.” Over time, Delaware was able to reduce taxes so that the top bracket was 5.95 per cent, and to keep spending increases to no more than 1 per cent.

A third major problem is the federal health care program. Why, asks du Pont, does the government want to take over health care, when that is something each of us in our families should be responsible for? This

“No government can be all things to all people...and we cannot demand that it must be.”

PETE DU PONT has been a state legislator, US congressman, and governor of Delaware. He ran for the Republican nomination for president in 1988. He cofounded and edited Intellectualcapital.com, an award-winning on-line public policy journal. He currently writes a regular column for the Wall Street Journal called Outside the Box. Prior to holding elective office, du Pont worked for the Du Pont Company in Delaware.
trend will not be reversed, he admitted.

Among other points, du Pont expressed some alarm over federal regulation of the oil industry, which has resulted in a drastic curtailment of drilling (from 3.5 billion barrels in 1970 to 2 billion in 2010). Also, drilling for natural gas and oil on 83 per cent of federal lands has been prohibited.

Our domestic production of oil once provided 88 per cent of our consumption, but it is now 37 per cent, so we are importing far more of the oil that we consume. The recent Keystone pipeline has been banned because of problems in some western states. The leap in the number of regulations by the federal government has been huge.

Governor DuPont asserted that “the American people are not terribly happy with some of this.” Dependency on the federal government for money, jobs, and other services has “shot up 23 per cent in the last couple of years.” And 56 per cent of the people are dissatisfied, 11 per cent are satisfied, and only 1 per cent is very satisfied. It is worth our attention to read the Heritage Foundation’s Index on Dependency on Government. For example, it reports that in the late 1960s, 12 per cent of the US population paid no income taxes; by 2000 it was 34 per cent; in 2009 it reached 49 per cent. Therefore, “the tax burden is expanding.” In the late 1960s, housing assistance totaled $2 billion, and by 2010 it had risen to $59 billion. Medicare and Medicaid are getting bigger.

There are very startling data about the birth rate among unwed women. In 1960 it was 5.3 per cent; in 2009 it was 41 per cent—“an enormous number of kids without full parents.” By 2015, the resources to support Social Security will be insufficient, and taxes will need to be raised or benefits reduced. College tuition has increased 439 per cent since 1982, about four times the rate of inflation.

Governor du Pont concluded with two summary points: the budget must be controlled and the economy must grow. Good tax reform must be passed. The Bowles-Simpson proposal was a good one. And we must shrink the deficits. Quoting from his gubernatorial inauguration speech of 35 years ago, du Pont said, “No government can be all things to all people, and we can neither pretend that it is, nor demand that it must be.” For him the question of the day is, “Are Americans near a tipping point in the nature of their government” and the principles that are shaping the nation? Quoting the conclusion of the Heritage Foundation report, he asked whether, in the end, “Americans are ready for the new class warfare, the battle lines of which are drawn?” Americans must be thinking about these things in order to get the economy back on track, which is the most important thing to do.

▲Reported by Ralph Moore
In his presentation, Mr. Prestowitz rephrased the Conference title question to ask, “Do we have what it takes to right our economy and maintain our economy in the increasingly competitive global environment; and do we have what it takes to have the economic backing for all the other priorities that we have?” Prestowitz maintained that economic power, as opposed to military, geopolitical, or soft power, was the most crucial area of emphasis for the United States going forward. He agreed with an earlier comment by moderator Nick Burns that economic power was the most important element because “without that, nothing else could be done.”

To answer his own questions, Prestowitz used the analogy of a bridge hand. In the game of bridge there are two components to winning. The first is the cards you are dealt, and the second is how you play your cards. He said that the hand he would like to play is still the US hand. Even while that hand today may not be as strong as it was 10 or 20 years ago, Prestowitz would still choose it over those of the eurozone, Japan, or China. Yet, he could lose with the US hand if he did not play those cards well. “So, how do we play the hand?” he asked.

To illustrate one of the challenges facing the US, Prestowitz pointed to the US 2011 trade deficit of about $600 billion dollars, about 3 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP). He called this “unsustainable.” He split the trade deficit into two components, services and goods; in 2011, the US had a services trade surplus of $200 billion, and a goods deficit of $800 billion, which included $600 billion in manufactured goods deficit (overwhelmingly the biggest component of trade deficit). Prestowitz pointed out that it will be tough to increase services to make up the difference. This goods trade deficit is a consequence of the loss of US manufacturing.

On the positive side, Prestowitz added that the US had recently received a huge gift from technology and nature. As a result of “fracking” to produce shale oil and natural gas, “we look to be on our way to carbon fuel self-sufficiency,” but that still will not fully compensate for the huge $600-billion deficit in goods.

Prestowitz stated that as a result of the loss of manufacturing, US manufacturing makes up a very low percentage of our GDP, less than 10 per cent, which compares unfavorably to Great Britain at 11 per cent, Germany at 18 per cent, Japan at 20 per cent, Korea at 30 per cent, or China at 40 per cent of their respective GDPs. He added, “How this has happened and what we can do about it is one of the most important questions facing the nation.”

Prestowitz cited as an example the announcement that Intel was opening a new Pentium chip plant in China. Currently, Intel produces those chips in New Mexico, but needs to expand capacity. Without any incentives, Intel has a comparative advantage in producing those chips in the US. Yet Intel chose to build the plant in China. The reason they did so was not because of cheaper labor costs (labor costs are negligible in producing the chips), nor because China uses the exchange markets to keep the yuan undervalued (which is an indirect tariff on US manufactured goods). The reason was the public policy of the Chinese government to monitor US companies and provide incentives for them to locate plants in China. In this case, China offered Intel free land on which to build the plant, a 25-year tax holiday, utilities at half price, and a $1-billion capital grant. The cost savings to Intel by building the plant in China was about $100 million per year.

Prestowitz contrasted the situation to that in the US, where the federal government has no agency that reviews what companies are doing and “does not engage in this investment attraction game.” Countries that keep track of corporate activities include France, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Israel, and Ireland. In contrast, the US does not even try to match offers from other countries. Individual states try to do so, but they lack the resources and
taxing authority to compete.

Prestowitz explained that when US corporate executives visit China, they meet with Chinese government leaders who put subtle (and not very subtle) pressure on them to place manufacturing facilities within China’s borders to maintain a good relationship with the government. The Chinese government wants the transfer of technology. When the decision is made to put a factory in China, it is viewed as a great training facility, and the news is highlighted in the media. This strategy is part of the corporate industrial policy of China.

According to Prestowitz, China’s strategy for economic growth was pioneered by post-World War II Japan, which has also served as a model for other Asian industrial strategies, such as those of Singapore and Korea. Each of these countries has followed an export-focused, manufacturing-centered economic development and growth strategy. One result is that Singapore’s GDP per capita is now higher than America’s.

Congressional leaders in Washington have accused these Asian countries of cheating. Prestowitz explained that the Asian countries may or may not be breaking any international laws, but they are simply playing a different game. They are playing American football, while the US is playing tennis. Therein lies the disconnect. There is simply a different view of the game in these other countries.

Prestowitz’s answer to his framing of the central Conference question: We do have what it takes to right our economy and maintain it in the increasingly competitive global economic environment. We do have what it takes to have the economic backing for all our other priorities. Yet the US needs to play its cards better. He believes that economic power is based on manufacturing of goods. The government needs to understand the game that it is playing (football, not tennis), and do a better job of establishing, negotiating, and pursuing a corporate policy for economic development and growth.

Reported by John W. Davidson

Q&A

Q: Don’t the Chinese require our companies to give up valuable technology in order to do business with them?
Prestowitz: Yes, they do. In the case of Intel, they are not putting in their most advanced technology. Perhaps a better example is General Electric, which is putting an avionics plant in China as a joint venture. I spoke to GE chief executive Jeff Immelt, who says that he will be able to protect his technology, but I don’t believe that he will be able to.

Q: (Moderator Burns) Isn’t there anything that the US government could do?
Prestowitz: Yes. The two options are to seek regulations or restrictions on what GE can do, based on the US research-and-development dollars invested in that technology. The second is to make similar requirements of Chinese manufacturers selling in the US market (ie, you must put a plant in the US to sell in the US). With the first option, you run into conflict with those who want less government and less regulation of US companies. With the second, you conflict with free-trade economists in the US and elsewhere. At the end of President Obama’s most recent visit to China, it was announced that the US would help China develop its own jet-liner business, one of the few industries where the US still has an advantage. It was done because the State Department needs China’s backing for dealing with North Korea. The way we play our hand, economic power is trumped by short-term geopolitical power.

Q: You advocate public policies supporting manufacturing in the US. You also supported the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). I’d like you talk about NAFTA and its impact on producing more things here.
Prestowitz: When it was being negotiated, I thought it was a terrible deal, but I supported it because it keeps jobs in North America. I’d rather have the jobs in Mexico, where many of the parts would be made in the US, than in China where all of the parts would be made in Asia. NAFTA is only a half-step. What I would like to see is a North American economic union, with one finance ministry, one currency, one tariff law, one trade negotiator, and one antitrust regime. More boldly, I would take that North American economic union and fold in both Korea and Japan, and ultimately New Zealand, Australia, and even the UK.

Q: It appears that we know what we need to do, but we don’t seem to be able to do it. Is that the case?
Prestowitz: I am afraid that we have given you a false impression. We don’t know what needs to be done. I have my own opinions and I think that I am right. I am a contrarian, but I believe that things are coming my way. Still, a lot of people out there would classify me as a crazy. The economics department at Harvard, for instance, would be appalled by my views. We are still groping our way forward.

Q: What is the proper role of government? How big and how involved should it be in our lives?
Prestowitz: The key question is, what is the right government/private-sector relationship? Big government is here, and has gotten bigger in response to each war and major economic contraction. Don’t make the mistake of believing that big government is measured by how much government spends. Singapore and Hong Kong top the Heritage Foundation’s Economic Freedom Index, but Singapore is involved in businesses in many ways that are not captured in their government spending. Hong Kong owns all the land, so their involvement in business cannot be measured by just government spending alone. The US economy, from its origins with Hamilton and Washington, called for a policy to support economic and industrial development. The cotton gin, interchangeable parts, and the telegraph were invented on government contracts. The Homestead Act created a US agricultural economy; the infrastructure of the US, bridges and roads, was built on government contracts. The US pursued these cooperative policies until after World War II. Since then, while the rest of the world has been playing football, we have been playing tennis.
Fire made us human. Fossil fuels made us modern. Now we need a new fire that makes us secure, safe, healthy, and durable. That has not just become possible; it actually works better and costs less than what we have been doing." On that hope-inspiring note, world-renowned energy guru Amory Lovins took the Conference on a whirlwind tour of a 2050 world in which the United States uses no oil, no coal, no nuclear power, and one-third less natural gas—all at a cost $5 trillion lower than "business as usual."

Lovins conceded at one point that such an outcome may at first seem incredible. But as Marshall McLuhan said, “...only puny secrets need protection. Big discoveries are protected by public incredulity.”

Before launching into a detailed effort to dispel that incredulity, the cofounder of the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and advisor to companies ranging from Walmart to Intel noted, “Today’s energy system is not just inefficient. It’s also disconnected, aging, dirty, and insecure...By 2050, though, it could become efficient, connected, and distributed, with elegantly frugal vehicles, factories, and buildings, all of them relying on a secure, modern, and resilient electricity system.”

The $5-trillion savings are all direct. Actual savings could be much higher, Lovins argued. “For example, America burns oil costing $2 billion a day, but that leaves out its hidden costs.” Those extra costs are at least $4 billion per day, he added, divided roughly equally between OPEC’s monopoly oil pricing, oil’s price volatility, and keeping military forces ready for Persian Gulf interventions.

“The Pentagon is preparing to need no oil,” said Lovins, who has advised the Pentagon and participated in a defense/science task force that helped set the military on a “revolutionary” path to energy efficiency. “The rest of us should [be on that path] too. We should be getting off oil just to enhance national security and save money at the fuel pump, even if it didn’t also have extra hidden costs twice as big,” not to mention any “damage to health, the environment, global stability, and development, or our nation’s independence and reputation.”

But how do we get there? “A good place to start would be making autos oil-free,” he suggested, noting that two-thirds of the energy needed to move a typical car is caused by its weight. “Over the past quarter-century, epidemic obesity has made our two-ton steel cars gain weight twice as fast as we have. Today, though, ultra-light, ultra-strong materials like carbon fiber composite can make dramatic weight savings snowball, and can make autos simpler and cheaper to build.” Engines get smaller as a result, making electric autos affordable.

Lovins illustrated his point by getting a resounding ring from a light-weight, carbon-fiber cap manufactured seven years ago at RMI, and then he tossed it out for the audience to pass around. He maintained that scaling up that sort of technology for autos “can save four-fifths of the capital needed for auto-making and can save oil equivalent to discovering 1.5 Saudi Arabias.” Those “nega-barrels” cost only around $18 each and are “inexhaustible, all-American, and carbon-free.”

Using “smart information technology” and other means to reduce traffic congestion and “needless driving” can move things along further and faster and provide the same access with 46 to 84 per cent less driving, Lovins said. Three years ago, Lovins noted, “mainstream analysts started to see peak oil, not in supply so much as in demand.” Deutsche Bank has forecasted that world oil use could peak around 2016. “In short, oil is becoming uncompetitive, even at low prices, before it be-

AMORY LOVINS is cofounder, Chairman, and Chief Scientist of the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado, which researches and advocates for efficient resource use and sustainable development. He has worked for 40 years in energy policy and related fields. He has published 29 books and hundreds of articles, and has consulted with a wide range of governmental, private, corporate, and international clients.
comes unavailable, even at high prices. Just what happened to whale oil in the 1850s.”

What’s more, electric cars need not add new burdens to the electricity system. Rather, the combination of smart autos, smart grids, and smart buildings can add distributed storage and flexibility “that help the grid to integrate variable solar and wind power.”

That brought Lovins to “our second big story [after saving oil], namely saving electricity and then making it differently.” Today’s system is so wasteful and efficiency technologies are improving so rapidly that “America’s electricity use could actually start shrinking, despite a little addition from the electrified autos.” Buildings use 75 per cent of US electricity, and “reasonably accelerating existing trends” could triple or quadruple their energy productivity, saving $1.4 trillion net present value, he maintained.

“Integrative design” could further boost savings. As an example, Lovins described a 2010 retrofit designed by RMI that has cut the Empire State Building’s energy use by 40 per cent: “Remanufacturing its 6,500 windows onsite into super-windows that pass light but block heat, plus better lights and office equipment, cut the maximum cooling load by a third. That way we could renovate and reduce the chillers, rather than expanding and replacing them. That saved $17-odd million, which helped pay for the other improvements, and it cut the payback time to just three years.”

Lovins said that his own house, located at 7,100 feet in the Rocky Mountains, has inspired 32,000 European buildings that are passive. “They use no heat. They have no heating system. But they cost about normal to build.” He then outlined simple process changes—such as installing larger, straighter pipes—that can bring “snowballing savings” in industrial energy use, as well.

Less need for electricity would “ease and speed the shift to new sources of electricity, chiefly renewable,” Lovins went on to say. As two indications that renewables are already road-ready. Half the world’s new generating capacity since 2008 has come from renewables. In 2010, renewables, excluding big hydro, got $151 billion of private investment, and surpassed the total global installed capacity of nuclear power. Last year, 68 per cent of Europe’s new generating capacity was solar and wind. “In contrast, global orders for both coal and nuclear plants continued to fade, because they cost too much and they have too much financial risk to attract investors.”

The cost of replacing “America’s aging, dirty, and insecure electricity system” by 2050 will be about the same—$6 trillion—whether it is accomplished with more of what we’ve got now, new nuclear and so-called clean coal plants, centralized renewables, or distributed renewables. “But these four futures differ profoundly in their risks around national security, fuel, water, finance, climate, technology, health,” Lovins said. “So our energy future is not fate but choice, and that choice is very flexible.” Combine the electricity and oil revolutions and the strong efficiency that underpins them, and “you have the really big story: reinventing fire”—which is the title of Lovins’ latest book. “Business—enabled and sped by smart policies and mindful markets—can lead the United States completely off oil and coal by 2050, saving $5 trillion.” Equally important in today’s polarized US political climate, he points out, “if you like any of those outcomes, you can support reinventing fire without needing to agree about which is most important. Focusing on outcomes, not motives, can turn gridlock and conflict into a unifying solution to America’s energy challenge.”

Lovins concluded, “What I’ve described here is not just a once-in-a-civilization business opportunity. It’s one of the most profound transformations in the history of our species. We humans are inventing a new fire. Not dug from below, but flowing from above. Not scarce, but bountiful. Not local, but everywhere. Not transient, but permanent. Not costly, but free. And but for a little biofuel that sustains and endures, this new fire is flameless. Efficiently used, it really can make energy do our work without working our undoing.”

He ran through a litany of additional facts to support his case that renewables are already road-ready. Half the world’s new generating capacity since 2008 has come from renewables. In 2010, renewables, excluding big hydro, got $151 billion of private investment, and surpassed the total global installed capacity of nuclear power. Last year, 68 per cent of Europe’s new generating capacity was solar and wind. “In contrast, global orders for both coal and nuclear plants continued to fade, because they cost too much and they have too much financial risk to attract investors.”

The cost of replacing “America’s aging, dirty, and insecure electricity system” by 2050 will be about the same—$6 trillion—whether it is accomplished with more of what we’ve got now, new nuclear and so-called clean coal plants, centralized renewables, or distributed renewables. “But these four futures differ profoundly in their risks around national security, fuel, water, finance, climate, technology, health,” Lovins said. “So our energy future is not fate but choice, and that choice is very flexible.” Combine the electricity and oil revolutions and the strong efficiency that underpins them, and “you have the really big story: reinventing fire”—which is the title of Lovins’ latest book. “Business—enabled and sped by smart policies and mindful markets—can lead the United States completely off oil and coal by 2050, saving $5 trillion.” Equally important in today’s polarized US political climate, he points out, “if you like any of those outcomes, you can support reinventing fire without needing to agree about which is most important. Focusing on outcomes, not motives, can turn gridlock and conflict into a unifying solution to America’s energy challenge.”

Lovins concluded, “What I’ve described here is not just a once-in-a-civilization business opportunity. It’s one of the most profound transformations in the history of our species. We humans are inventing a new fire. Not dug from below, but flowing from above. Not scarce, but bountiful. Not local, but everywhere. Not transient, but permanent. Not costly, but free. And but for a little biofuel that sustains and endures, this new fire is flameless. Efficiently used, it really can make energy do our work without working our undoing.”

Reported by Sarah Miller
Colonel Wilkerson (USA—ret.) began with homage to Joshua Chamberlain and the soldiers of the 20th Maine regiment at Gettysburg, who embodied the higher military values of courage, duty, and honor in the most terrible of all US wars. He then quoted President Eisenhower: “National security is not about soldiers [or] aircraft carriers [or] the paraphernalia of war. It is about the ultimate feeling of the American people for their democratic federal republic...about their grandchildren’s future, and that ultimately rests on the strength of our economy.” Wilkerson added that Eisenhower also made his famous statement, “...be wary of the military-industrial complex.” He was going to say “military-congressional-industrial complex,” but an aide deleted the reference to Congress.

Wilkerson also quoted Senator John McCain as once saying, in reply to a question, “Ike was not only right, what’s happening today is horrible.” (Wilkerson added that, like President Eisenhower and Senator McCain, he is a Republican.)

“So how did we get to be the national security state that we’ve become?” Wilkerson cited 840,000 top secret clearances and $6 billion spent on new “assets” and facilities for the Director of National Intelligence. Osama Bin Laden spent $500,000 on the 9/11 attack; the US has spent $2 to $3 trillion in retribution—not very efficient.

Wilkerson described his recent visit with members of Congress and staffers to speak with them about the danger of war with Iran, accompanied by representatives of the Friends Committee on National Legislation. (He joked of being “the Quaker colonel.”) He argued for an “incidents at sea” agreement with Iran, to include the Iranian Revolutionary Guards naval force as well as the regular, professional Iranian navy. Such an agreement might prevent war triggered by “Tonkin Gulf II”—an ambiguous attack on a US warship leading to escalation. He argued for face-to-face, regular communication with Iran, which existed in 2001 and 2002, before President Bush’s speech about “the axis of evil” ended US/Iran contacts. Wilkerson was told that “the space is closing down” for anything other than war.

“The herd mentality” will take over, and those who want sanity will be overwhelmed, Wilkerson said. He mentioned a measure sponsored by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that would make illegal any US contact with representatives of the Iranian government. This language was dropped, but the tough sanctions that passed may ensure war. He said “the Iranians will never accept” these sanctions.

Wilkerson then referred to the National Security Act of 1947, which established the present US national security structure. (The 1947 Act set up the National Security Council, formed the Department of Defense that combined the military services, and established the CIA, all overshadowing civilian diplomacy through the State Department.) He quoted General George C. Marshall’s comment at that time: “I fear we have militarized the decision-making process.”

Wilkerson then mentioned some consequences. In the entire history of the United States, including the Colonial era,
terrorism has killed about 5,000 Americans. Since 9/11, 300,000 Muslims have died in the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were retribution for those attacks. Instead of spending trillions, the US should have been “resilient” and moved ahead.

Who fights these wars? Less than 1 per cent of US adult citizens go “in harm’s way,” drawn from “the lowest 1 per cent in terms of power.” There are “very few Harvard graduates.” Socrates was right; old men send young men to war. In the US, the top elite send others to war, and sometimes dismiss moral responsibility for putting others’ lives on the line. Wilkerson quoted an unnamed New York lawyer as saying, “They signed up and they get whatever they deserve. We pay them well.” He was outraged.

Wilkerson also mentioned the pressures of the military-industrial interests that dominate even the top decision-makers: Secretary of Defense Gates wanted to kill the F-22 manned aircraft program, but after a bruising political battle, he was forced to compromise.

In Iraq, troop deficiencies were made up for by private contractors who “are everywhere.” By using private contractors, US policy seeks to “privatize the ultimate public function—war.” Wilkerson added that the US may no longer have the capability for a major war, because “the contractors will not go.”

The president uses the military because it is the only effective instrument of foreign policy. This practice is dangerous. Wilkerson referred to Alexander Hamilton in The Federalist #41—overreliance on the military in the hands of the Executive can be fatal. Congress has abdicated the war power to the president. The War Powers Act is only a reporting mechanism; presidents believe of the congressional power to declare war, “You do not have it.” We are now faced “every single day” with “the constant, unceasing usurpation of our liberties” by the national security state. He described himself as the “radical middle,” sitting with and between the National Rifle Association and the American Civil Liberties Union.

“How do we get this [war power] back?” Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can save us from a national security state. Part of the problem is with us as citizens—we seem to say, “Give me security at any cost, including my liberty.” Irrational policy is not the doing of the military. The military promotes excellent education. It values science and technology. For example, the military is preparing for more frequent “100-year storms,” which may now occur every 10 years. The rest of the federal government is “playing ostrich.”

George Washington said not to get entangled with other nations. But our foreign policy now is to “do anything for Israel that Israel needs done.” US and Israeli interests are not always congruent; the interests of any two nations sometimes diverge. Wilkerson said a politician recently told him that, yes, now US/Israeli interests are always congruent. This comment, says Wilkerson, is part of the “herd mentality” in Washington. He mentioned that Israel’s interest in keeping the West Bank is water—73 per cent of Israel’s water comes from there.

In World War II, the US played a major role in production, supplying all its allies for the war effort. Then, during the Cold War, we had a policy of containment. Now, we have no grand strategy at all. We need more money for diplomacy as part of the shift to a more rational and less militarized foreign policy. Donald Rumsfeld remarked that the Defense Department “loses” more money every year than the entire State Department budget. The real security budget is not the $662 billion reported for defense, but closer to $1.2 trillion a year, if you add intelligence (“greater than $100 billion a year”), homeland security, veterans’ affairs, and nuclear weapons.

Colonel Wilkerson concluded by saying that the military agrees that we need defense cuts, but they must be smart ones.

Reported by Seth Singleton
Beyond Risk and Threat: The Need for a National Strategic Narrative

We should focus on credible influence rather than control.

Captain Wayne Porter and Colonel Michael Mykleby

Speaking on the topic of a grand national strategy they cowrote, Captain Wayne Porter (USN) and Colonel Mark Mykleby (USMC—ret.) offered not only an explanation, but a call to action. Describing himself as a “nonlinear, nonconventional connector of dots,” Porter began the presentation by pointing out that, as a serving officer in the US military, he had to give a disclaimer that the opinions he would express would not necessarily be those of the Navy or the Department of Defense. Porter then went on to outline the origins of the strategic narrative. In 2008, senior officers at the Pentagon, as well as then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, determined that the nation needed a more cohesive and pointed national strategy to replace what had become, in Mykleby’s words, “…a watered-down wish list of too many things to too many people.” Toward that end, Porter and Mykleby crafted a document that, at its core, takes our measure as a people. In fact Mykleby, in a nod to Alexis de Tocqueville, said that he and Porter didn’t set out to write a strategy so much as a story of America, “because that was the number-one thing that America was missing.” They felt they had to first ask: “What are we about? Who are we as a people?” before going on to posit where America should be going strategically.

Previous national strategies saw their task as one of threat control. Both speakers felt that those strategies, rooted in the cold war, operated under the principle that US security meant that there was a threat that should be contained and controlled. However, Mykleby opined that “any kind of control policy, as leveraged off of force and power and rules, doesn’t apply to the rest of the world anymore.” This shift made imperative that they question all current strategic thinking and structures. In what would be one of many allusions to interdisciplinary sources, Porter drew an analogy to early-twentieth-century quantum physicists who “demonstrated the empirical truths of uncertainty” and in so doing upset the the philosophy of certainty that had governed Western thought since the Enlightenment. Porter explained, citing Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, “you can measure a quantum particle’s momentum or its place, but not both simultaneously.” The fact that we now live in an uncertain age, brought about by the explosion of digital information, gives metaphorical truth to this principle.

Another analogy, that of the biosphere (the global sum of all living ecologies), demonstrated that conventional national strategies applied the “closed-system” thinking of the cold war era to our new “open-system” world. The eventual consequence of this thinking, if left unchecked, is a state of apathy.

In a strategic ecology, everything is interdependent and the sustainability of systems becomes imperative. “Rather than seeking to control,” stated Porter, “we should be focused on having credible influence. Rather than force and power, we should be focused on strength”—a strength that manifests...
itself through the “enduring power of our economy and our moral character.”

Stepping back for a moment to focus the scope of their vision and lend it some framework, Porter and Mykleby identified two enduring and interdependent national interests: prosperity and security. But they added that, unlike other nations, our “pursuit of prosperity and security were constrained and empowered by the values that characterize us as Americans,” values that have given us credibility as world leaders. Mykleby detailed how these mutually inclusive concepts don’t necessarily need an external force (as defined by the conventional wisdom at the Pentagon) to threaten them. In fact, a grand strategic concept in the twenty-first century must place our nation’s domestic interests in mind to best serve its citizenry. Returning to the idea of our nation as an organism or ecology in a biosphere, Mykleby identified the achievement of sustainability as vital to maintaining our prosperity and security.

This ecological sustainability requires three qualities—diversity, depth, and resilience—that we, as a nation, need and must rediscover. Mykleby cautioned that our current over-reliance on “brittle” food and fuel systems is unsustainable in the open-ended world of today. Citing an urgent need for “smart growth at home and smart power abroad,” and echoing comments made earlier by Amory Lovins, Mykleby argued for “converging” America’s domestic and foreign policy into one national strategy of sustainability, terming the present practice of considering them separately “a false choice.” This, Mykleby said, would be “our functional framework for a grand strategy.”

Returning to the “story” of America, Porter rhetorically asked, “What is it that made us great? It was our willingness to compete. Yet somehow over the past 20 years, we have become competition-averse...we have allowed ourselves to become overwhelmed by our own exceptionalism.” In short, our hubris has rendered a once dynamic system static, and we are not shifting quickly enough toward a sustainable future. Quoting statistics that place America ever lower on international education rankings, Porter wondered if we’re not squandering our nation’s youth—undoubtedly our most valuable resource. He termed this moment in history our “Darwinian moment, the time to resieze our own destiny and to decide where we want to go in an interdependent environment and future,” adding, “We can have hope and opportunity in the future, if we give ourselves the right tools.”

Additionally, both Porter and Mykleby stress the importance of researching renewable energy sources to ensure that Americans feel secure enough in a broad sense to continue taking the entrepreneurial risks that the economy needs for them to take.

Mykleby concluded by calling out those Americans he considers to be “residents” of the country rather than citizens. Both men said that there is too much partisan infighting and “cherry-picking” convenient “rights” for themselves out the Constitution, and not nearly enough service by the people, for the people. To underscore this point, Porter said he takes pride in his years of military service, but warns, “...the responsibility for the future of the nation can’t be left simply to those who were sworn to support and defend the Constitution. It belongs to all of us. It belongs to all of you.”

Reported by Dwight Blue

---

**America’s Future Global Challenges**

A globalized world still needs US leadership.

Nick Burns

Ambassador Burns began his remarks by underlining the many and difficult challenges the US faces in creating a grand strategy for dealing with this increasingly globalized world. After summarizing his Foreign Service experiences in Cairo, Jerusalem, Athens, and Brussels over the past quarter-century, Burns observed that President Obama now faces the most complex array of foreign policy challenges since World War II. However, Burns acknowledged, today is not the most fateful time for America. The mere existence of the United States was at stake during the American Revolution, and our most dangerous time was the
Civil War, which nearly tore us apart. Mobilization to fight on two fronts—imperial Japan and Nazi Germany—during World War II involved a supreme effort, both abroad and at home. However, now we live in the most complex time, even as we remain the most powerful country in the world.

What did President Obama find in his foreign policy/national security inbox as he assumed office in January, 2009? America was suffering from the worst worldwide recession in decades, with full depression a real possibility. One might question whether the recession is over—economists say yes, but many Americans still suffer and do not believe the statistics. Parts of our financial system have lost their credibility, but Washington did not create this problem—all of us bear at least some responsibility for it.

On the overseas front, the president has had to fight two foreign wars. The human cost of the war in Iraq has been enormous. The US has lost the confidence of many because we have invaded two countries in the heart of the Muslim world. In Afghanistan, our troops have had successes and setbacks with no end in sight, but we have made a commitment to end major American military engagement in 2014.

Two rogue nations, Iran and North Korea, want to upset the balance of world power, the first aspiring to be nuclear-armed and the second already in possession of nuclear weapons. Moreover, North Korea’s new, untested leader, “a previously unemployed 28-year-old,” leads a nuclear-armed country that has cheated on all of its international agreements, while in a sense having the protection of China. Iran, the leading sponsor of terrorism in the Middle East, is a most difficult state to deal with. Its irrational leadership, over decades, has supplied weapons and training to many terrorist movements pledged to kill us. How do we deal with this government?

And where is the Arab Awakening going? In Egypt, young idealists inspired the revolution, but the Islamic Muslim Brotherhood has achieved power through democratic elections, leading to crushed hopes and broad uncertainty. Another challenge is the ongoing revolt in Syria, as brutal warfare escalates. How does the President respond? We are committed to democracy, but we and our allies require oil and gas as well. There are no easy answers to these complicated questions, Burns observed. The president’s inbox always receives the impossible problems. Easier problems are solved by others.

Europe still matters greatly to us. Will the euro crisis become worse, and can the euro zone even survive? “I believe there will be a Greek default,” says Burns—and what then? Europe includes our strongest allies, customers, and partners across the board. We should remember that NATO’s Article 5, stating that when a member is attacked, all are attacked, has been invoked only once—one day after 9/11. On that day, famously, France’s flagship newspaper Le Monde issued the headline, “We are all Americans.”

Cybercrime against the US is a growing problem. It has become another element challenging our security and promoting the creation of a cyber command in our military.

Numerous other transnational challenges face us, including climate change, trafficking in women and children, international crime cartels, pandemics, and predicted global food shortages. The 9/11 attack involved conventional crude technology, but what about terrorists gaining chemical, biological, or nuclear materials to launch some future attack? Burns declared that we cannot go it alone, and must take advantage of various opportunities. Cool, rational, painstaking thought must be employed.

He outlined four guiding suggestions for future action:

► We must think about a reorganization of today’s great powers to cope with the dark issues we face. We need to create world power structures that look beyond the now outmoded strategic arrangements made when the United Nations was founded in 1945. The structure of the UN Security Council (UNSC) should evolve beyond the five permanent and veto-wielding members created in the aftermath of World War II. Brazil and India, rising economic nations, should be considered, as should an African nation, to represent the only continent with no permanent status in the UNSC. Japan and others might be considered as well. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should also be modernized to reflect these wider governance changes. China, especially, should be involved, as America’s largest international creditor and our biggest customer, in acknowledgment of our symbiotic economic relationship. Ownership of world decisions by the rising powers will be essential. As we engage China, India, Brazil, and others in these decisions, we must also ask them for more ownership of the consequences.

► We must move our domestic economy forward; the health of our private sector will be a key factor.

► We must return to diplomacy as our primary means of dealing with international problems. Historically, our diplomats have been on point, with our military in reserve. Following 9/11, the US has assumed a defensive crouch—Afghanistan and Iraq being the most visible cases in point. Never before have Americans been involved in such lengthy occupations, and we civilians did not have the foresight to perceive the longer-term implications of such actions. Of course, the military will continue to be our ultimate line of defense, as they back

Nicholas Burns is currently professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics, as well as director of the Future of Diplomacy Project at the Kennedy, School, Harvard University. He retired from the State Department in 2008, after a distinguished 27-year career that spanned several administrations and included service as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador to NATO and Greece, State Department Spokesman, and National Security Council staff member, among numerous other postings.
our diplomats when needed. But to come out swinging is not the first option anymore; therefore, we need to talk to our enemies. Serious talks with Iran should take place. In Iran, our aim should be a diplomatic solution to effect positive change, keeping in mind that talking with our enemies will require some compromises. America should not become overly enthralled with military options. Preventing wars is as important as winning them. To achieve the goal of peace, we must integrate the efforts of both the State Department and the Pentagon, so that they are linked in efforts to defer war, or, if need be, to win one decisively. An underfunded State Department will have difficulty accomplishing its business.

Q: Why no uproar about the passing of the National Defense Authorization Act? It looks like a real threat to our freedom.
A: Wilkerson agreed completely, citing a conversation he had had with personal friends in Congress who saw the bill as signifying the end of Posse Comitatus (the 1878 act of Congress that barred the US Army from being used in domestic law enforcement). It allows future presidents to do things that were previously deemed dangerous to our democracy.

Q: What do the speakers think of the idea of imposing universal national service, and what would be the potential impact on the future of the nation?
A: Mykleby said he believed there should be compulsory national service, but not for the military. “The need for extensive training and experience in today’s very technical military makes the short-time citizen soldier a waste of money.” Burns agreed, noting that universal service, as practiced today in Israel and Norway, was both a societal leveler and a creator of a wider sense of national unity and purpose. Both men mentioned several non-military forms such service could take.

Q: Our elected officials in Washington seem to overemphasize using our military and reducing the funds available for diplomacy. How can we change that?
A: Wilkerson and Burns agreed that the US military understands what Congress seems not to, and now sees its main job not as waging war, but preventing it. The military is focusing its resources on fulfilling that role, in support of the diplomatic efforts of the State Department.

Q: Please discuss the legality, morality, and efficacy of drone strikes.
A: Wilkerson answered that this issue was much on the minds of all thinking members of the military today. “What does it mean ethically to have the ability to kill several hundred people with no danger of injury to yourself?” It’s a question, he said, that is “ripping at the heart of the military.” All agreed that if such technologies reduce the human cost of going to war, they will increase the temptation for politicians to wage war. This whole development needs more consideration and thought than we’ve given it so far.

Q: Why is it so important that we be a world leader in the twenty-first century?
A: Burns replied that it is important because, at present, no one else can fill that role in a positive way. The threat of a leadership vacuum is not so much a takeover by China or someone else as it is world anarchy. Wilkerson added that there are definite problems with our current role as the “global cop,” the main one being that the strength of our military, together with the openness of our society, invites “asymmetrical response” by whichever “bad guys” we crack down on. Because of this reality, we should be doing more to share our policing duties with other countries.

Q: What does the use of waterboarding and other torture say about our values?
A: Capt. Porter pointed out that his position as a serving officer disqualified him from commenting on the question, but he said we shouldn’t waste time looking backward and blaming. Wilkerson, having retired, was free to lambaste the practice of torture, saying that he had proof that the claims for its effectiveness “by the Vice-President [Cheney] were lies.”

Q: For Amory Lovins, how do we counter the money and influence of the energy companies who deny global warming and oppose renewable energy?
A: Lovins replied, “The questioner implies monolithic opposition by the energy companies, whereas I am seeing a growing number of energy executives who are thinking and doing the opposite.” For the laggards, Lovins recommended selective pressure to “evolve them toward a more constructive point of view,” by pointing out that they can “have better earnings and less risk and give better service at lower cost by concentrating on renewables. If they don’t understand that, try talking to their investors, who usually will.”
In a stark, data-driven discussion, Professor Robert Schwartz established that the true struggle of education in America is “existential.” He reached into our history to identify the “ideological chasm” that has existed since our country’s inception, and in his opinion still does, between the individual and the state. Who is responsible for the quality of education? The data indicate that the United States has failed to maintain its reputation for providing quality public education for all of its citizens. Considering that in the US, more money is spent on each student than in any other country except for Luxembourg, Schwartz asks the obvious question: Why are our students falling further behind while the cost to educate them continues to rise? The answer to that question has eluded government at the local, state, and national level for several decades.

In the late 1970s, a debate during the Carter administration began to shed light on the need for a separate cabinet department for education. A 1983 report (titled “A Nation at Risk”) “put education policy and the urgency of improving our education system in an international context for the first time,” and “from 1983 on, education has continued to be on the front burner as a significant domestic issue and now, increasingly, a global issue.”

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the sponsor of an international assessment of 15-year-olds in 34 participating countries (Programme for Individual Student Assessment, or PISA), offers the data with which to assess what “we’ve learned from looking at the highest performing countries.” Schwartz utilized the PISA evidence to draw comparisons between the US and other countries, and to provide insight into the decline of US performance since the 1960s as it relates to school completion. According to PISA, the US spends, on average, more than $100,000 to educate a student who is, on average, ranked twelfth in reading literacy, seventeenth in science, and twenty-fifth in math. The assessment was “designed deliberately to be independent of curriculum, and designed deliberately to measure how well students are able to take what they have learned in school and apply it to novel situations.” Schwartz notes that past assessments merely measured how well students had mastered the curriculum they had been taught, with no way of knowing how well the students could generalize the information and apply it.

While the US rankings are indicative of decline, the information offers little insight unless we understand the common characteristics of the profiles of highly performing countries. With this deeper knowledge, the US can begin the process of unraveling the issues facing American education.

Before Schwartz contended with the characteristics of high-profile countries, he discussed what may be the most critical piece of information: school completion. In the 1960s, the US ranked first in the world in school completion rates; by the end of the 1990s, this rate had dropped to thirteenth, and that rate has stagnated. In comparison, Korea, once ranked twenty-seventh, is now leading the OECD countries. As a complement to these data, Schwartz then looked at college completion rates (which have also stagnated in the US) to offer further insight into the failings of our students. In the studies in which Schwartz participated, four characteristics emerged in the profiles of high-performing countries:

- Financing education is focused on equity across the system; the dollars go where they are needed. The financing is a state responsibility, not a municipal or local task.
- The governance system is less complex. As Schwartz laments, “There is much, much less machinery sitting between the state, setting broad goals and providing resources, and the schools, where people have enough confidence in principals and teachers to give them the authority, the autonomy, the responsibility, to figure out how, given their local situation, to best tailor their programs to meet the needs of their students.”
- Incentives are present in the system; poor performance has consequences. The assessments are richer and independently administered, and students are...
well aware of how their performance is connected to the kinds of opportunities that will be available to them after high school.

- The selection, training, and development of teachers are much more rigorous, analogous to the preparation necessary to become a doctor in the US. There are “no alternative pathways into teaching, no shortcuts; teaching is seen as a profession that requires rigorous preparation.”

In comparison, Schwartz reviews the four priorities set by the Obama administration, which intends to:

- Support bottom-up development of “common core standards.” Forty-five states have come together and agreed that multiple state definitions of proficiency don’t make much sense. States are now working to align benchmarks with other states and countries.

- Strengthen teacher evaluation systems and utilize evidence of student learning in teacher evaluation. Schwartz clearly stated that he believes this is “not a recipe for progress” because it requires more testing, which is highly variable and subjective.

- Promote charter schools or school choice. Evidence shows that unbalanced charters are no better than typical schools. In other countries, focus is on continuously improving the larger system as a whole.

- Turn around the lowest-performing schools. In the US education system there is high variability within the student population. Twenty per cent of young people are coming from families living in poverty (compared to 4 per cent in Finland.)

Schwartz then shifted to a report written by economist Ron Ferguson and journalist Bill Simons to provide a comparative perspective. Although the performance of 15-year-olds on the OECD assessment provides insights into the failings of our public schools, perhaps our concern should also focus on the graduation and employment rates of 25-year-olds. In the report, data indicate that 50 percent of 25-year-olds have completed some postsecondary education, but what does that mean for the other 50 per cent?

The Georgetown Center on Education in the Workforce suggests that “by 2018, 63 per cent of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education or credential, compared to only 28 per cent in 1972.” The report also says that “the economy is being bifurcated into high skills and low skills, and the only choices are a bachelor’s degree or beyond, or you are consigned to a lifetime of low-wage and low-skill employment.” High rates of both unemployment and job vacancy had more to do with the skills of those who are available to fill the jobs. As Bill Clinton said, “We are the only industrialized country that has no organized strategy to help young people get from high school to work other than through our formal higher education system.” By contrast, Europe offers a system of highly structured programs that provide the opportunity for applied academic learning, creating a bridge between school and workplace.

A study of 15 countries conducted by the OECD, entitled “Learning for Jobs,” outlined the main characteristics of mixed work and learning systems:

- Alignment of academic and technical preparation
- Very strong employer involvement, driven by the needs of the economy
- Representation by a broad range of occupations
- Mainstream programs designed to serve a broad range of students with a broad range of skills
- Programs growing out of a social partnership involving employers, government, trade unions, and educators

“As the Europeans say, the young people own the skills, the company doesn’t own them, so they can take [their skills] and move along, not just inside a company, but can transfer laterally to other sectors if they choose.” The mixed work and learning systems result in significantly higher graduation rates and much lower youth unemployment. Unemployment is lower in countries with effective vocational education programs. Coincidentally, these countries also boast robust manufacturing economies.

Perhaps to emphasize the daunting process ahead, Schwartz left the audience with this final thought: “These programs are the product of a social contract between adult society and its young people. They are based on the premise that young people need a lot of support to make this transition, not simply to move from school to work, but also from adolescence to adulthood, and these are really reflective of a broader societal commitment to the socialization and development of the young.” Schwartz reminded us that, whether at the local, state, or national level, in our public schools or our colleges, it is imperative that we look to the highest performing countries and their systems of public and vocational education, and draw from that knowledge the skills and requirements our students need to compete in a rapidly changing world.

Reported by Judith Masseur
In her second appearance at a Camden Conference (her first was in 2005), Deborah Amos addressed the significance of the Arab Awakening and the role social media is playing in those events. “The challenge is to understand what the Arab Spring is about and what it is not about, and what the US should do about it. This is a moment when power is changing in the Middle East.” To put that statement into context, Amos pointed out that of 22 Arab countries, in only three have autocrats have actually been ousted. Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh is unlikely to resume his rule, and Bashar al-Assad is fighting a war of attrition against a substantial part of his population. “But make no mistake, we have a long way to go in this Arab Spring, and every Arab leader is feeling the heat.”

What are the uprisings about? Most importantly, they are about a young generation of Arabs demanding a voice, according to Amos. While the media and academia were focused on Al Qaeda and terrorism over the last decade, they ignored the fact that 60 per cent of the population in the Middle East is under 30, and in Saudi Arabia the under-30s account for 70 per cent of the population. “It was this youth bulge that took the leadership in this so-called Arab Spring.”

Economic factors played a part. In the Middle East, job prospects for the young are the worst in the world. Although young Arabs are more educated than ever before, the more educated a young person, the less likely he or she is to find a job. For example, unemployment among college-educated Saudis is 40 per cent for men and 85 per cent for women. This generation, living at home for economic reasons, cannot take on an adult role. “With time on their hands, they could afford to surf the net, get involved in online political movements. Through the media they discovered that other people share their views and situations.” Dissatisfied with its governments, this generation took the lead in act one of what Amos refers to as the Arab Awakening.

“This was the Facebook revolution—it was Tweeted, it was live-streamed, it was uploaded, it was on YouTube, it was on Bambuser, it was on smart phones, it was on digital cameras. This was a rebellion using American technology to demand democracy.” The story of Bouazizi, the fruit-seller who set himself on fire in Tunisia, was told and retold on social media throughout the area, inspiring others to organize, protest, criticize their governments, and march for what they said was democracy, transparency, accountability, good governance.

It may be that the role of social media was made possible because technology was in place in the area, and there was outside help. Revolutionaries in Tunisia had already gotten help from groups such as Anonymous and Telecomis, which supplied the software to get around Ben Ali’s firewalls that limited access to the Internet. At the same time that social media took off in Tunisia and in Egypt, a group of students in Belgrade organized the Center for Applied Non-Violent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), where they taught the tools of nonviolent protest. “Young Arabs came for lessons—how do we do this, how do we bring down a dictator?”

Ultimately, in Tunisia and in Egypt cell phones became perhaps more important than the Web, with 93 mobile phones per 100 people in Tunisia and 67 for every 100 people in Egypt. In Saudi Arabia people posted opinions on YouTube and listened to news in numbers unprecedented in that country. When Hosni Mubarak shut down the Internet in Egypt, Saudi bloggers and Tweeters took over that space and...
kept the conversation going across the Middle East. Social media shaped debates on democracy and freedom across international boarders. And large protests almost always followed a spike in Twitter traffic.

The transforming effect of social media in the Middle East helped activists find a grassroots, local audience and, perhaps more importantly, helped many in the audience become activists. Amos quoted a poll by the Dubai School of Government, conducted through Facebook, in which 56 percent of Egyptian respondents said the government efforts to block the Internet and Facebook made people more determined to become more active. This reaction can be explained in part by sociologist Ziad Munson’s work showing that the strength of people’s beliefs does not drive their level of activity, but that their activity drives the strength of their beliefs. Social media made it easier to go out to the street because others were doing the same thing, and to become more active once there. Act one was all about these movements and gatherings.

We are now in act two—the elections. The young revolutionaries, with no political experience and little organization, are ceding control to the Islamists. Social media can start a revolution, but starting a political movement is a very different kind of work, Amos pointed out. The revolutionaries had education in nonviolent rebellion, but not in running for office or forming political parties. The Muslim Brotherhood, meanwhile, knew how to organize, campaign, convince grassroots voters to back them. The Brotherhood had experience providing the social welfare that the governments did not provide: health care, banking, security. The youth were at the top rung of society. The Muslim Brotherhood worked at the bottom.

“We expect the upper class to be liberal, but there aren’t enough of them to move the dial in the Middle East. But there are enough on the bottom rungs, and the Muslim Brotherhood brought them out,” said Amos. “You can argue that the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood is anchored in the past, not the future; that the younger revolutionaries haven’t had their chance yet; that we don’t really know what their vision is. Meanwhile, the Islamists have adopted the narrative of the revolution. Even their party name reflects that—the Justice and Freedom Party. They promote themselves as democrats.”

“These revolutions were fought and won over domestic issues. This was a fight against bad government, corruption, repression, misappropriation of resources, and crony capitalism, and it was fueled by a generation who understood that if there wasn’t change, they had no future.” When fighting corruption, you go to the clean guys, Amos noted.

Act three is yet to come. The question is, what does the US do now? Amos concluded by quoting the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland: “Don’t just do something, stand there.” It may be that this is the best course for American foreign policy, she said. “There is so much that has to play out in the region that perhaps it is best to watch it rather than trying to steer it, for the moment.”

Amos responded to the question, “Will Assad fall?” with these comments. “My logical mind says he cannot survive; he has gone too far. I think we are far from a tipping point, however.” Amos objected to calling what is happening in Syria a civil war. “I don’t think it is a civil war. A civil war suggests that you have two sides that are roughly equally armed. This is a war of attrition. Every time the army goes in, it is harder to get people to behave. The army leaves and the protesters build up again. It is costly for the military. Eventually the protesters win this game, but it takes a long, long time.”

In response to a questioner who asked what would happen in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict if Assad falls, Amos responded, “It depends on who wins and whether he is in a business suit or a military uniform. We will have to know a lot more about how Assad falls before we know what it means regionally. If Syria changes, the whole region changes.”

Asked if the Islamists and the revolutionaries could somehow share power, Amos responded that they are not in opposition, but the revolutionaries aren’t ready. “They say to the Islamists, ‘Let’s see if you can deliver. If not, we are still here and we will be back.’ In time, the stands of the revolutionary youths will become political and we will see if they are different.”

When asked if the fact that the young people have hope is positive, Amos responded, “That is how I feel. This is the first time in my career I have felt that yes, this is really a historical shift. Al Qaeda had the same aims; it was addressing the same anger. These kids were able to do nonviolently what Al Qaeda was never able to do.”

In response to a questioner who asked whether the revolution was stolen from the women with the election of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Amos responded, “Women are going to have to organize. It is how women’s rights happen everywhere. I’m hoping that social media may change that. Women participated in the revolution. I think that we are going to see women fight for it, which is how you win it. I think the role of women has been underplayed.”

“Social media can start a revolution, but starting a political movement is a very different kind of work.”

Reported by Judy Stein
Wrapping Up: Questions for All

The Conference traditionally concludes with a discussion panel that takes questions from the audience and engages the speakers with one another. Sunday’s panel, moderated by Nick Burns, included Deborah Amos, Pete du Pont, Mark Mykleby, Wayne Porter, and Larry Wilkerson.

Q: Could all these great ideas we’ve heard here be put in a format to be laid on President Obama’s desk, or to be put forward at a significant forum, as was the 1948 speech that proposed the Marshall Plan?
A: Burns advocated working on wider dissemination of the Camden Conference content, adding that, to get the proposals on Obama’s desk, all the attendees who feel strongly about these proposals should advocate them publicly. Porter repeated proposals that had been made to him the past two days, such as: presenting the ideas to service clubs around the country, or making the candidates for national office in the coming elections discuss them in their debates.

Q: A high school senior, noting that she was already seeing competition from around the world for places in college and for jobs, asked, “What must my generation do to ‘have what it takes’ to keep America a world leader?”
A: Wilkerson noted that the College of William and Mary, a Virginia state school, had lost a large part of their state funding and was compensating by bringing in full-tuition foreign students, including from China, thus having to turn down some qualified American students. Although Wilkerson saw a problem with the process, he said that “educating Chinese and American students together will ultimately be good for them and good for the world.” Mykleby pointed out that the Latin root of our word competition means “to strive together,” not to beat the other guy at any cost. To succeed, Mykleby said, we must compete fairly and with confidence in our system’s values.

Q: Do we have the confidence as a nation to go to zero nuclear weapons?
A: Wilkerson cited recent rumors in Washington that a study was under way for bringing our total number of nuclear warheads to 300; “...that’s [down from] from the original 28,000 and the current 800.” He then quoted Colin Powell’s assertion that the “nuclear genie was out of the bottle and we can’t dis inve nt nuclear weapons.” As a result, we will probably never go all the way to zero, as long as rogue states or movements either have them or are trying to get them. Burns agreed, noting that the current US effort is to focus on creating nuclear-free zones around the world and then trying to expand them.

Q: Will Col. Mykleby please explain his comment that needed “change would come from the private sector, not government”?
A: Mykleby said, “I’m not saying there’s a magic formula out there, but rather pointing out that the government is broken right now and lacks the agility to rise above the ideological fist-fights. The challenge for the private sector in fulfilling a role of change-agent will be to subject its profit motives more to its civic responsibilities.” Wilkerson added that he continues to be impressed by his private-sector collaborators’ “creativity, agility, mechanisms, and enlightened self-interest,” and their awareness of how they are being hurt by monopolistic practices that have put the private sector in a bad light. Burns spoke up in defense of certain branches of the government that he felt worked well, pointing out that the real problem is the gridlock in Congress. Governor du Pont added that government was also working well in the states and cities of America.

Q: Can we achieve the educated public that America needs when our media focus on “the Kardashians and Dancing with the Stars?” Is our current media system serving us well?
A: Amos spoke of her frustration with the current state of her profession, blaming the increasing number of profit-oriented corporations in the media business for “the incessant loss of news minutes” and the reduction of serious news outlets to only a few, which increasingly must rely on foreign journalists because the US doesn’t produce well-trained ones anymore. “So to get good news, you have to go look for it.” Another problem Amos mentioned was the tendency of young Americans to believe that “if the news is important enough, it will find me,” meaning through Twitter and Facebook messages from their friends.

Q: Is there a role for religion in world affairs?
A: Porter urged that in dealing with other nations with other religions, it is useful to understand and emphasize our common religious values. As a nation with “a tradition of inclusion for all religions and even non-believers, we have a natural strength in this area.” He cited the example of the Islamic world. While 90 per cent of those killed by Al Qaeda are Muslims, millions of Muslims live happily in the US. These are the people who can best win us friends among their coreligionists around the world. What non-Muslim America can do is address the social issues that exacerbate US/Islam relations.

Q: How can we get the US government to be a better supporter and promoter of US business, as China is?
A: Burns, admitting that our government could improve a lot in this respect, noted that we don’t play that game as effectively as the Europeans do. “French president
Sarkozy will fly off to a foreign country” to help close a deal; American presidents don’t. He cautioned that we don’t want to go as far as the Chinese in some respects, citing their frequent violations of trade rules and fair practices, and adding that Washington should “call China and other governments on their malfeasance.” Governor du Pont said that the best assistance the federal government could give American companies would be to stop interfering in their business efforts, at home or abroad.

Q: What should American journalism be doing to end the divisive reporting on TV?
A: Amos pointed out that the news “is a market” and that you have to encourage the high-quality products, citing the networks she went to for responsible news (BBC, France-24 in English, Al Jazeera, NPR, and the Canadian Broadcasting Company). Regarding the networks with divisive news, she urged the audience to “starve them of capital” by “turning them off.”

Q: The National Strategic Narrative advocates more divergent thinking and interdisciplinary learning as a way to compete internationally. How do we square this approach with the success of China, with their very rigid educational system?
A: Wilkerson described the success of a Georgetown University program in which students used all the interdisciplinary resources of the institution to work on proposals for real world problems submitted by the US Senate. Mykleby added that the Chinese themselves recognize that their current educational system is flawed and stifles innovation, and they’re seeking change it.

Q: Author Allison Stanger believes that our government will expand outsourcing of its functions to for-profit corporations. What will the role of government be in this new world, and how would the ecological education advocated by Porter and Mykleby prepare students to take part?
A: Porter said that our government’s goal should be “a convergence of fairly competing and ethically based [entities] and pursuit of common values,” seeking solutions in which everyone wins. Mykleby tackled the educational part of the question, pointing out that the solutions of the future would have to “be based in science and in moral recognition of interconnectivity, ie, strategic ecology,” which requires that we get away from “us-versus-them thinking.” With such skills, America would lead, but from a point of partnership, not a point of paternalism.

Q: Lovins spoke of the “opportunity savings” of avoiding wars. Could we have avoided the war in Afghanistan?
A: Wilkerson, who worked with Secretary Powell at the time of 9/11, pointed out that we had given the Taliban rulers of 2001 Afghanistan the choice of handing over the Al Qaeda leaders or war, and that they chose war. We then had to overcome the costly, difficult logistics of supplying an army there, and do so for 10 years. In retrospect, he would have advised going in enough to “kick their butt and get Al Qaeda’s leaders” and then getting out, with the warning that we’d come back and do it again if we had to.

Questions about Middle East Policy
Many questions concerned the Middle East, and they are presented together here.

Q: What are the prospects for post-America Iraq, given the continued Sunni/Shia divide?
A: Amos said things don’t look good in Iraq, citing the unexpected rush of Iraqi Shia and Sunnis to aid their coreligionists in Syria, and the related exacerbation of communal enmities in Iraq.

Q: Given all we having riding on Egypt, what should be our strategy?
A: There seemed to be a consensus that in the unsettled situation in Egypt, we need to be very patient (Burns), stick to reiteration of our American goals and values (Amos and Porter), and adhere to an integrated approach that keeps all of our interests in mind (du Pont). Wilkerson added that we must resist any efforts by Israel to unduly influence our Egyptian policy.

Q: Will the Arab Spring influence US views of Islam, and will the social media have a role in any such changes?
A: Amos felt that the way things were playing out undid many American prejudices about the Arab world, in part because many see the revolutions as a sign of Arab rejection of the precepts of Al Qaeda. Wilkerson noted the effort of Frank Gaffney and a number of American right-wingers who are spending millions of dollars to excite anti-Islam sentiments in the US.

Q: Will Netanyahu drag us into war with Iran?
A: Burns gave a brief summary of the apparent (but secret) current US policy toward Iran, which recognizes Israel’s legitimate concerns about the Iranian threat but is strongly urging Tel Aviv to avoid war and wait and see if the new sanctions are effective. Burns said this effort is wise policy and pointed to recent signs that it might be working. Wilkerson and Mykleby voiced their agreement with the policy.

Q: What role will Turkey have in the Arab uprisings and in US policy in the region?
A: Amos cited Turkey as a model for the Middle East, noting that Turkey has proved that a Muslim nation “can not only be religious and democratic and not lose its culture, but also achieve 20 per cent economic growth without having any oil.” This example definitely had some impact on the demonstrators in Tahrir Square. The US must try to work with Turkey, but we must remember that their interests will not always be the same as ours.
About The Camden Conference

The Camden Conference—established in 1987—provides the opportunity for renowned experts and interested individuals to share knowledge and concerns on issues of global importance. Each year, a topic is selected and a series of related events is held in Maine communities from Damariscotta to Bar Harbor—culminating in the weekend Conference in February in Camden. The Conference is simultaneously streamed to audiences in Belfast, Rockland, and Ellsworth.

Community Events include lectures, short courses, and symposia; group discussions of selected books, articles, and news reports; and films, art exhibits, and other cultural occasions. All events are open to the public and most are free of charge. They are led by scholars and other well-informed area residents.

Speakers at the three-day Conference come from government, business, the media, academia, and international organizations. Each speaker addresses a facet of the year’s topic, answers questions from the audience, and participates in an exchange of ideas. The speakers generally spend the entire weekend in Camden, challenging each other both publicly and informally.

In previous years, The Camden Conference has examined such topics as “The Environment and Foreign Policy,” “Religion as a Force in World Affairs,” and “US Global Leadership in the 21st Century.” In some years, the focus has been on specific geopolitical areas such as the Middle East; China; Europe; and Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. Next year’s Conference will consider “A New Arab Awakening: What Next in the Middle East?”

The Camden Conference is a nonpartisan, federally tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The Board of Directors includes residents of 16 midcoast towns, all of whom volunteer their time and talent to organize the Conference and related programs.

Financial support for The Camden Conference comes from attendance fees; individual gifts; and grants from institutions, foundations, and corporations.