
ASK CANDIDATES FOR THEIR VISION OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Nancy Kassebaum Baker and • Gary Hart • Special to the Register • October 20, 2007

As the pace of the presidential campaign quickens this autumn, Iowans have an extraordinary opportunity to urge the candidates to present their visions of America's role in the world.

Challenging the presidential aspirants on this subject is especially important at a time when America's prosperity and security have become inextricably linked to that of other nations and their people.

The growing sense of connectedness with the world beyond our borders can be felt deep into America's heartland. Each year, Iowa alone exports billions of dollars worth of machinery, farm goods and manufactured foods. Trade with other countries supports one in five jobs in this state. Foreign students come in droves to Iowa's colleges and universities, spending nearly \$150 million a year.

At the same time, we know that military power alone cannot keep us safe from global threats that recognize no borders. Our nation's top national security, military and foreign-policy experts agree that genuine security at home is illusory in a world in which 10 million children die every year of preventable diseases before they reach their fifth birthday, where 77 million children don't attend school and where more than 1 billion people lack clean water.

We need a bold, new vision for American foreign and security policy, one giving greater emphasis to strengthening our non-military tools of global engagement. That vision must recognize that our own security needs are increasingly those of our allies, and that "going it alone" is not an option in this complex world.

The task is not just about more money or more blue-ribbon commissions. What's needed is a greater focus on diplomacy and development, and the determination to use these tools to forge a cogent, coordinated effort among our allies to advance global health, education and prosperity. This is not only the right thing to do; it is also in America's own economic and security interests.

While the threat of diseases like polio, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis, SARS and avian flu may seem far removed from daily life in the U.S., in the age of global air travel, these illnesses can jump across borders in hours, with tragic results. Beyond resulting in unnecessary deaths, they can destabilize entire regions and cost the world billions of dollars in lost wages.

Our investments in eradicating these diseases pay handsome dividends with regard to our own economic and public-health interests.

Investments such as these do not alone make a foreign policy. But they should be the basis of a strategy to use *smart power* - the strategic integration of diplomacy and foreign assistance with our defense and intelligence activities. By aligning the exercise of smart power with our nation's constitutional principles, our foreign policy will represent the best of American values.

This blending of the pragmatic with the idealistic - a hallmark of our past foreign-policy successes - will enable us to reaffirm America's tradition of moral leadership and, in turn, do much to improve our nation's image abroad and reduce our vulnerability to threats from destabilizing forces.

We must increase our commitment to listen and learn while helping other countries stand on their own two feet, eradicate disease and reap the benefits of the global economy. That's a cost-effective way of addressing the foreign-policy and security challenges we face now and are likely to face in the years ahead. We also need to equip the next generation of Americans to live in a globalized world by placing higher priority on global studies and foreign-language training in our high schools and colleges. Earlier this year, 93 percent of respondents to a survey by the American Security Project expressed the fear that the decline of America's global leadership and moral authority is a "serious" national security problem. Notwithstanding the sharp divisions that exist with respect to specific foreign-policy approaches, there appears to be considerable common ground upon which to build a new vision of global engagement with bipartisan support.

America's next president must be prepared to lead with bold new ideas for encouraging global cooperation in the pursuit of freedom, security and economic opportunity. Let us ask the presidential candidates to give us their broader vision of our country's role in the world.

Let us ask them to demonstrate how they will revitalize America's moral and pragmatic leadership by making greater investments in development and diplomacy, and by modernizing our foreign-assistance institutions to tackle the global challenges of today's world.

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