

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for the Nomination Hearing of
James Steinberg and Jacob Lew to be Deputy Secretaries of State
January 22, 2009

I join Chairman Kerry in welcoming our distinguished nominees. I appreciate the impressive experience and talents that they would bring to the Deputy Secretary positions.

During Secretary Clinton's recent hearing before this Committee, there was much discussion of the reinvigoration of the diplomatic option relative to the use of military force. This was a prominent issue in the Presidential campaign, as well. The debate on when to pursue diplomacy – and by implication, when to pursue military force -- is a logical one to have arisen given the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But I would offer a slightly different emphasis today in advance of our discussion with the deputy secretary nominees.

I share the view that it is necessary to shift resources toward diplomatic tools, or "Smart Power," as some have called it. But to be effective over the long run, we must do more than demilitarize our foreign policy. We have to make it less reactive. Too often in the post-Cold War era, U.S. foreign policy -- whether based on diplomacy or military action -- has been a crisis response exercise. Often these crises have been associated with a specific country, be it Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Russia, Cuba, Venezuela, etc.

Sometimes protecting national security does come down to a crisis response. But if most U.S. foreign policy attention is devoted to problems fomented by hostile regimes, we are ceding the initiative to our rivals and reducing our capacity to lead the world in ways that are more likely to affect our future. I am not suggesting that the United States can ignore states like North Korea and Iran. I am suggesting that we cannot afford to allow our concern with such regimes to shorten our strategic horizon, unjustifiably concentrate our resources, or rob us of our foreign policy initiative.

If the United States is to remain secure and prosperous it must seek to shape the diplomatic and economic conditions in the world. We should be asking how do we change the rules of the game in ways that benefit stability? How do we raise costs for those pursuing a course inimical to our interests? How do we avoid repeatedly being confronted with nothing but bad options – one of which usually is military force?

We have a tendency to glamorize the dramatic milestones of foreign policy: military operations, summits, diplomatic crises, or groundbreaking speeches. In most administrations, the Secretary of State's time is consumed by such events.

But the long-term effectiveness of our policy usually depends on how diligently we have attended to the fundamental building blocks of U.S. foreign policy, especially alliances, trade relationships, well-functioning embassies, reliable intelligence, humanitarian contacts, effective treaty regimes, and a positive reputation abroad. If this preparation has been neglected, no amount of charisma, bravado, or diplomatic skill by the commander in chief and the national security team will make up the deficit.

I offer these reflections at this hearing, because improving the capabilities of the State Department and developing long term strategic plans often fall to the Deputy Secretaries. To illustrate what is at stake, I would cite the gradual loss of our strategic advantages in Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus as Russia strengthens its energy supply position and the Atlantic alliance experiences intensifying divisions. The conflict in Georgia and Russia's recent natural gas delivery suspensions may seem to some like distinct crises, but they are more accurately perceived as manifestations of the failure of the United States and Europe to coalesce behind a strategic diversification of energy supplies.

In the coming years, we will be faced with numerous problems that will be more acute if we fail now to employ strategic initiative. How will we deal diplomatically with the prospect of declining oil production worldwide? Even as we attempt to mitigate greenhouse gases, will we help other regions adapt to the specific changes in the global climate that many scientists are predicting? Do we have a plan to double or even triple global food yields to accommodate the expected surge in demand for food? How will we reinforce the non-proliferation regime worldwide at a time when interest in nuclear power is increasing rapidly? Can we preserve and expand an arms control regime that is at risk of deterioration? What is our plan for managing our economic and security relationships with rapidly growing nations, particularly China and India?

Like most secretaries of state, Secretary Clinton may have little choice but to keep her vision fixed on the crisis or negotiation of the moment. But I am hopeful that both of our nominees will be advocates for long-term strategic vision within the State Department and the Obama administration. As you support the Secretary's efforts, I would urge both of you to consider every day what can be done to build the capacity of the Department, prepare for the likely circumstances we will face in coming years, and change strategic circumstances in ways that increase our diplomatic options and leverage in the future. I thank the Chairman, and look forward to our discussion.

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