U.S. Global Leadership Coalition
Impact 2012 Symposium
July 17, 2012

Senator John Kerry (D-MA)
Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

DAN GLICKMAN: Thank you. Well, we – I have the privilege of introducing a friend and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry – no stranger to, I'm sure, anybody in this room; you know, a man who is one of the most respected voices on national security in his own right as chairman of the committee, as an adviser to presidents, including President Obama. You are all aware of his distinguished public service in the Navy, two tours in Vietnam. And he is an expert in a whole range of issues involving national security and foreign policy, including nuclear nonproliferation, climate change, Law of the Sea, U.S.-Soviet – U.S.-Russian relationships, the Middle East. About everything that he is involved with touches our lives and touches the lives of people in this country. He is a champion that we can count on. He is a strong supporter of diplomacy and development, in addition to defense, which is, of course, at the heart of what we're all about. He has led on important humanitarian issues, efforts to fight poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence against women. He's been very involved in economic issues, including the Global Investment in American Jobs Act. He champions efforts to secure adequate funding in our international affairs budget and to defeat onerous and draconian cuts in our foreign aid budget. He is a confidant of a lot of folks in the world of foreign policy, from President Obama to leaders all over the world, and he's viewed as a man of extreme credibility and thoughtfulness on issues that are so important for America.

So I want you to join me in welcoming to the stage a champion of smart power, a true American patriot, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator John Kerry. (Applause.)

SENATOR JOHN KERRY (D-MA): Thank you very much, Dan. I accept the nomination! (Laughter.) Boy, it doesn't get – you don't get a better introduction than that. I'm trying to figure out which party offers those nefarious and mean-spirited cuts. I never can figure that out. Maybe you can help me with that one.

I am really delighted to be here, and thank you. Dan was telling me we have a bunch of veterans here, and I'm proud to be here with you. And I want to offer my profound gratitude on behalf of a very grateful nation for your service, for all of you. And looking at this audience, I see that probably there's a range of years of service. No disrespect to some of the gray hair I see in the audience, or lack thereof. I am very, very grateful that you're all here, and privileged to be able to have a few moments to share some thoughts with you.

And I also, as a sitting member of Congress, it's pretty nice to be invited somewhere to speak anywhere, you know? (Laughter.) I was walking through an airport not so long ago and, you know, you can tell when you have that moment of recognition from somebody and this guy suddenly pointes over and, hey you, hey – hey, you, anybody ever tell you, you look like that

Kerry guy we sent down to Washington? (Laughter.) And I – and I tell him, yeah, they tell me that all the time. He says: Kind of make you mad, don't it? (Laughter.)

So I don't have any illusions, folks. I don't know how Dan does it. He travels the world and he covers so many important issues. And as you know, he puts out the annual report of leadership, on U.S. leadership. And Congress only received a good evaluation, as compared to outstanding marks for the executive department. And I decided in coming here that I would not question the methodology, because the truth is, I'm absolutely thrilled to see the word Congress and good in the same sentence. (Laugther.) That's pretty important.

But I want to extend a thank you to the global leadership coalition. Now more than ever we need a strange bedfellows coalition, frankly, like the USGLC, that can bring together American business with leading humanitarian NGOs and faith-based organizations and others, to make the case for smart power. And it's a case that, regrettably, needs to be made to deal with some of the toughest challenges that we face in an ever more complicated world. In many ways, the world that we're dealing with today is far more like the 19th and 18th century worlds – worlds of – you know, the Metternichs and Disraelis and others and state power and state interests, and very different from the 20th century and particularly the latter part of the 20th century, which was so characterized and defined by the Cold War, by a very easy kind of East-West bipolar relationship that was pretty clearly defined between the West and communism and totalitarianism.

But the world has changed very significantly since the Berlin Wall fell, since the 1990s. And with the emergence of a level of sectarian strife, ethnic strife, religion tensions, many of which were bottled up by virtue of the Cold War and totalitarianism – for instance, the former Yugoslavia and Tito and so forth – now all unleashed. And we saw that in Bosnia in the 1990s, ethnic cleansing, and we see it in many other ways today. And that makes our challenge that much greater. And it's probably one of the reasons that you're seeing these very simplistic bromides being offered in our so-called political dialogue. I have hard time considering the shouting match, the perpetual 24/7 cable television shouting match, as a dialogue. But such as it is, it's dragged down to the lowest common denominator of policies and of American politics. And believe me, my friends, we all lose by virtue of that. We all suffer, because we're not making smart choices, if we make choices at all, if they're not just whatever is forced on us.

From the pandemics that we face in various parts of the world to climate change, we actually have a "flat-earth caucus" in the United States Senate, people who will stand up and tell you climate change isn't happening – despite 6,000 peer-reviewed studies that tell us as a matter of scientific fact that human beings are creating this transformation to some degree – not everybody can tell you exactly what outcome or what degree – but we know it's happening. But we have people, United States senators, who stand up and say: There isn't enough evidence. Actually, we have a nominee for president of the United States – erstwhile nominee who has now taken the same position. So that's where we find ourselves: failed states, failed statism; Pakistan as complicated as a country could get, as difficult a challenge of governance, as well as in other parts – and I can run through the long list, unfortunately, of countries.

But really the bottom line is, in my judgment, what it demands is a new strategic definition for this moment, and one that we can actually take out to the country and be proud of and organize around, one that has a greater commitment to diplomacy and to development, and

that understands why we do that; that America's global leadership is a strategic imperative for us – it is not a favor that we do for other people – a strategic imperative for us. It amplifies our voice, it extends our reach, and it should be clear, in a world that is growing more, not less interdependent, with forces that no politician can turn around – no politician, no leader anywhere in the world can tell you they're going to reverse the force of globalization or the force of technology – but much of the anxiety in the world is a clash between culture, history, custom, mores and modernity. And a lot of people have a difficult time making that transition.

We – you know, and of course, in keeping with what Dan said about nefarious attacks and so forth, we have folks who want to slash our foreign aid and development investments and who are somehow pursuing a formula for isolation and for shrinking influence at a time when that is exactly the opposite of what is in the interests of our nation. Leave party aside. Leave liberal, conservative, Democrat, Republican, independent – leave it aside. Just think as a matter of practical, common sense about this planet we live on and about our shared responsibilities and about how you change things.

Getting the message across is obviously a lot easier said than done. We don't have a Grover Norquist who is out there pushing a pledge to never cut the State Department budget. You know, there's no American Association of Retired Persons equivalent – AARP, as we call it – out there somehow arguing for foreign assistance or arguing for the benefits and rallying millions of Americans to the cause of understanding what is in fact in the interests of our country. We don't have a whole lot of people threatening to throw politicians out of office if they don't invest in Africa.

So we have a problem. We have three inextricably linked challenges, in my judgment, that threaten America's strength and leadership in the world from within: first, an ideological, an unprecedented ideological agenda on Capitol Hill that sees foreign aid as an easy target in these tough economic times; second, a budget crisis that calls on all of us to put our fiscal house in order. I could tell you a story and a half about that one, having spent six months on the supercommittee desperately trying to get a deal with people who just didn't want to make a deal, who refused, in the end, to make a deal. And then of course, we have, finally, a deficit in our diplomatic and development civilian capacity, which is caused by the excessive commitment to military solutions for comprehensive problems that require a different set of solutions. That's how I see the sort of three challenges of formulating this new strategy.

Now, how we get off the sustainable fiscal path is a story that I'm not going to relate completely here, but I will just tell you that I thought we offered, in good faith, a $3.7 trillion deal, a $4 trillion deal, a $1.2 trillion deal – everything to avoid sequester and to be responsible, send a message to the country that we can get our job done.

But without some revenue in the mix, given the fact that revenue was at a 60-year low relative to GDP, and spending is at a 60-year high, you think you've got to kind of bring the two together – that's sort of common sense – and given the fact that in the 1990s, each of the four years that we balanced the budget, folks, revenue was at about 20 (percent) to 21 percent of GDP, 15 percent, 20 (percent) to 21 percent. And we have a whole bunch of people saying no revenue.

Well, if that's the equation, it also means no Head Start, no Pell Grants, no R&D, no NIH, no foreign assistance investment – not spending, investment – in protecting the interests of our country. And that's the choice. That's the choice that we're facing now.

You know, just a few years after I came to the Senate – I came in 1985; Ronald Reagan was president and the Berlin Wall came down, as we all know – and the way we had been conditioned to think about international relations suddenly collapsed. And we cut our international affairs budgets to the bone and dramatically reduced the size of our diplomatic and development rosters. And back then, just as today, other developed and developing countries were making far-reaching choices to shape their future in a different way, to move their economies forward in a new and very different global era, which is why today you see South Korea, Mexico, Brazil, India, China, others growing in double digits – beginning to not even pay attention to the United States except where they absolutely have to.

But instead of responding forcefully and with strategic purpose, we enjoyed a certain level of triumphalism at the fall of the former Soviet Union, and increasingly found partisan interests driving the national good far from a bona fide national dialogue. And the results were predictable: the deficit and resources, personnel and expertise at USAID, a State Department that lacked the agility to respond to emerging crises effectively, a military that wielded outsized influence in foreign policy and an American public that was wary of international engagement.

And then of course came September 11th, 2001. And lo and behold, folks then suddenly asked the question why we were ill-prepared, why we were not able to respond immediately to a world of networked actors and transnational reach and failed states and populations that were trapped in decades of poverty and conflict and neglect and in humiliation from their own leaders who refused to deal with the problems of their own lives.

In hindsight, we can see that the horrific attacks that took place against us on September 11th didn't change the world so much as crystallized developments that had been brewing for some period of time. And we responded the only way we know, the only way we really were capable of responding at that point of time. We took a hammer to a problem that really required a scalpel, and we engaged in a war of choice that turned the Middle East completely upside down, allowing Shia to accomplish what they hadn't accomplished in 1,200 years on their own. And all of sudden, Iran had an ally in Iraq, and built its strength, obviously, with Syria.

So we deployed our military to solve problems, frankly, to some degree, that demanded all the tools of our national security. So bottom line is, I believe we got away from our fundamentals, from the slow, patient work of building free market democracies that would buy our goods and serve as a force for stability in regions of critical importance to our national security.

So here we are now suddenly at a moment of great uncertainty, at the same time of great promise, in my judgment. And how we respond today, what president we have, what party embracing what vision as we go forward from now, could not be more critical to our nation's fundamental economic and national security interests.

Our challenge, I think, is three-fold: confronting ideology with common sense; increasing the effectiveness of our foreign assistance, and righting the imbalance between our

civilian and military institutions. Above all, I think we have to seize this moment to establish America's leadership role in diplomacy and development, and I believe that will make the world safer, and that will certainly make the United States of America both safer and stronger.

So let me just look at the first challenge very quickly for a moment. The ideological assault on foreign assistance: In the plainest terms, folks, I don't – I'm not going to turn this into a huge partisan kind of thing, but I do want to state facts. Facts, as we know, are stubborn things. John Adams told us that a long time ago. And what we're up against is a kind of narrow-minded agenda that sees foreign aid as an easy target in a time of budget crisis. So House Republicans want to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority. I can't imagine anything that would tumble the Middle East more rapidly into a radical tailspin. They want to withhold our U.N. dues. They want to slash the budget of programs that support women's and children's health and other health issues like the HIV/AIDS and other programs that have made such a difference to lives.

I'll tell you, there's nothing easier than going to a town hall, go out to Peoria and say you want to cut aid to Palestine. It's a great applause line. It's easy politics, but it's not smart politics. It's not smart power. In terms of advancing the interests of our country, it is exactly the opposite. Our friend and colleague Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York reminded us frequently: Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but they're not entitled to their own facts. Regrettably, in today's America, because of Citizens United, you can go out and buy your own facts. And we've got a lot of people doing that right now.

Now, here are a few facts. One percent of the budget – that's what we're talking about. One percent of the budget is our foreign assistance budget, a little bit more. You can cut the whole thing. You can cut all of the discretionary budget, which is only 12 percent of the budget – I mean, you can cut all the grants to cops in various communities and various efforts we make for education and everything. You can cut it all. It's only 12 percent of the budget. You can't deal with the problem doing that, folks – not to mention the harm you would do to the long-term growth and welfare of our nation.

So the work we do with the money that we have in that little old tiny 1 percent probably buys us more than any other sector of the budget in the United States of America, when you think of what we get in various parts of the world for what we do.

It doesn't go to rich nations. It goes to children that we vaccinate against polio, or it engages at-risk youth in Central America, or it helps women become self-sustaining business owners in Jordan. It provides basic water and sustenance to some of the poorest countries in Africa. And I'm proud of the work that we've done in that regard, and I think you ought to be too. And the reason that we ought to do those things is because it makes a difference ultimately to the development of those nations, to the stability of those nations, to the capacity of those nations to embrace democracy, and ultimately to be able to offer the kind of opportunity that we believe comes with democracy to their citizens.

Secretary of State George Marshall understood that. After World War II, Europe was in shambles – beyond depression. The economy was crushed. People were starving – same thing in Japan. And the United States of America – against the will, I might add, of the majority of Americans at the time – understood there was a value to rebuilding Germany and rebuilding

Japan. And today, folks, Germany and Japan are among our strongest allies, they are among the strongest democracies, among the strongest economic forces on the planet – although, obviously, Japan's going through a difficult time. But look at what they've become as a consequence of the choice we made with American taxpayer dollars, and what we get for it in the Far East as well as in Europe. The success of President Truman and the Marshall Plan has become one of the foundational narratives of American foreign policy. And understanding that isolation was no longer a choice, it led Europe out of the darkness.

Now, I just give you a few examples of how this kind of involvement makes a difference. Exports today support nearly 10 million jobs in the United States. They drive a substantial percentage of our economic growth. Nearly half of U.S. exports go to the developing world, and that share is increasing about three times faster than exports to other countries. Add all this up, and it means that our economic prosperity is directly tied to our ability to create new American markets overseas. That's in America's interest.

The Overseas Private Investment Corporation does its part. And under the Vietnam Support for Trade Acceleration, or STAR, program, USAID has helped Vietnam improve its trade and its regulatory climate. And the results speak for themselves. For minimal investment, the United States has reaped enormous returns with exports to Vietnam increasing by over 700 percent. That's our benefit. Take South Korea – between 1953 and 1973, the United States provided some $4 billion of assistance to South Korea. Today, South Korea is the world's 15th-largest economy, our seventh-largest trading partner. And if you look at the top 15 export markets for the United States, 10 of them are former aid recipients. So you talk about a good return on the dollar, it's extraordinary.

Now let me – you know, I see that we're sort of running low on time a little bit. I don't know how tight time is, Dan. We're OK a little bit?

But I want to – you know, for any severe conservative out there – (laughter) – let me just say to you, what is – what is fiscally responsible about starving our foreign policy budget of a billion dollars today, only to spend a trillion dollars later when an otherwise avoidable crisis or armed conflict engulfs us? I don't get that. The simple fact is that every single day the State Department leads operations that strengthen our security. And I believe President Obama and his foreign policy team have been exceptional in their ability to be able to marshal diminishing resources and maximize the results, with major changes to how we do USAID, to how we are engaged in these countries, to what our metrics are, to how we do the kinds of things that make a difference.

And I think that, you know, teaching foreign military officers American values and skills actually creates additional defense capacity, so that down the road, if you had to, we can fight together with burden shared equitably. And training foreign law enforcement and counterterrorism officials in American investigative techniques improves their capability and our security. These are all linked. Implementing stricter exports controls, training international weapons inspectors and securing our borders all allow us to guard against the most pernicious of threats, which is terrorism by weapons of mass destruction.

Now, I think most of everyone here would agree that Secretary Gates – Bob Gates was a terrific secretary of defense. And he knew how to serve the country not a party. And when he left, he said this: Development is a lot cheaper than sending soldiers. Nobody understood better than Bob Gates how this transformation – he was the one who raised the excessive reliance on the military and the amount of transfer that had gone from development and State Department into our military budget. So I believe it is clear that investing our – that increasing our investments in diplomacy and development is critical and we have to keep working on it. And it is very clear to me there is a gulf – wider than this stage by far – between the two parties as to their view about how we do that and what we ought to be doing.

Now, I have long advocated the use of enterprise funds as a way to help grow the private sector. And Senator McCain and I traveled together to Egypt, to Cairo. And we brought with us Jeff Immelt of General Electric and the head of Coca-Cola and other major corporations, to show that we were prepared to invest and to try to make a difference in a country that is one-quarter of the Arab world, and where we are blessed not to have the sectarian divide of Shia and Sunni, but a very strong history of civil society and an ability to be able to try to build an economy. Before Tahrir Square, the Egyptian economy was at 8 percent growth rate. That was a little bit over a year ago now. They could quickly get back to that, if they could find a way forward in terms of their current political and economic divisions. And I believe – I'm hopeful that over time they're going to sort stumble forward and be able to do that.

But we need to set our own clear priorities here, friends, going forward. The United States can't be everywhere at once. We know that. It can't solve everyone's problem, and we're not going to try – nor should it. But our goal ought to be to create the conditions for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, so the countries themselves can turn freedom into lasting democracy and economic opportunity. And I think if we focus our assistance on countries that are committed to reform, that is one way that our aid programs work best. We also need to focus on what is sustainable – critical component. Putting sustainability front and center means responding to legitimate needs and allowing our assistance to be demand driven as opposed to being determined by the interests of the supplier. And it also means a clear hand-off strategy, so that we step back after we have engaged people and transferred responsibility to other donors, to the private sector, and most importantly, to the host nation itself.

And finally, if the early years of the 21st century have taught us anything, it ought to be that in a globalized world, our problems are more interconnected than at any time – at any time in history. Never has been the planet – has the planet been as small and as integrally important, each to each other, as we are today – like it or not. Today over 80 percent of all money flowing from the United States to the developed world comes from private sources. So if we're going to meet the challenges of the next century, I believe we – of this century – we have to engage in a new strategic public-private partnership.

And the kind of the thing that John McCain and I did in Egypt I think ought to be replicated because it's one of the ways we're going to attract private capital – huge amounts of private capital. We have $2 trillion, apparently, of American business money sitting overseas looking for places to invest. And when you add Gulf state money and China and these other growing nations – it's not a lack of capital folks; it's a lack of confidence. It's a lack of stability.

And if we build that stability and build that confidence, we will find the capital, we will grow these economies, we will create middle classes and we will find the stability that begins to begin to bring people together and changes the possibilities for everybody on this world.

But we have to build our civilian capacity to do this. That is the third challenge – to right the imbalance between civilian and military institutions. I'm passionately committed to and an admirer of what our military is today. I just was on USS Wasp in Boston the other day – a marvel, a modern fighting machine, with people on it who are so technically skilled and capable that it's such a different military from the one I was in, and many perhaps here. And we are really in awe of it, and second to nobody in the world, obviously.

But we can't leave the military to pick up the slack for the things we're failing to do in building those institutions. We can't – I've met many a young capital or a lieutenant out in the field – in Iraq or in Afghanistan, in Kunar province, in Helmand, wherever – who are called on to be, you know, an organizer, a politician, mayor, psychologist, diplomat. They do extraordinarily, but they don't have all the tools at their disposal that we ought to have in terms of the kind of development partnerships and initiatives that would make the difference in the end.

So, bottom line my friends, all of this is at stake in two very competing visions about how we get from here to there in these next few years and what our responsibilities are. I am sort of interested that as we think about all of our missions in life, it's – I think – I have discovered, at least in these last years, much more than I ever imagined – the level of religious division – a divide, for instance, between Shia and Sunni that runs so much deeper than I had ever imagined – just to pick one example. There are many. But when you think about our missions in life, it seems to me that people today are drawing lines in sand in ways that we didn't have to cope with, certainly, in the latter 50 years of the last century, that are formed around these religious and sectarian lines.

And what is ignored by so many people – and I've been involved with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Prince Ghazi of Jordan and others who are engaged in an interfaith initiative to try to bring people together to understand the commonality of the Abrahamic faiths. And it may seem odd to you, but I think that has to be one of the sort of pillars of our outreach to the world, is to – is to help moderate Islam be empowered to fully define the real Islam, and not allow it to be hijacked by a bunch of people who take a verse from here or a verse from there for their own purposes but ignore the underlying principles of their religions and of all of the Abrahamic religions – there isn't one of them.

In fact, folks, if you go look at it – and I'm sure you, you know, have or will at some point in time – there is not one philosophy of life or organizing principle around which most people in life are engaged, whether it's Buddhism or Confucianism or you're a Native American or whatever your touchstone is with respect to your, you know, choices you make on a moral basis as a human being. The truth is that the Judeo-Christian, Islamic, et cetera, ethic – all of them share a golden rule. They all have a fundamental commitment that calls on people to love each other, that calls on people to understand each other, that calls on people to be tolerant and that calls on people to understand you should do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

That is – in fact, Rabbi Hillel of the Jewish faith was once asked, can you define the entire Torah in one sentence and standing on one foot. And he did. He stood on one foot, he said one sentence and he said: You know, the entire Torah is subsumed in the idea that you do unto others as you would do unto yourself, love the God your – you know, love God. And that is the entire Torah. And everything else, he said, is commentary. (Laughter.)

So my friends, we need to remember here who we are. What's our DNA as Americans? And I believe that our DNA is defined by the Marshall Plan. It is defined by America's commitment to PEPFAR. It's defined by America's willingness to go to the help of other nations – whether it was World War I or II or in other times in our history. Our DNA is to pursue the higher moral ground and to indeed be guided by some sense of aspiration.

I came into politics in the 1960s, in the years of John and Robert Kennedy. And I was inspired by the concept which we were reminded of when my colleague of 26 years, Ted Kennedy, spoke about his brother at St. Patrick's Cathedral. And he reminded everybody of his brother's favorite poet. As the poet said: Some men see things as they are and ask, why? I dream things that never were and ask, why not? I think that's when America is at its best. And that's what smart power is actually all about. Thank you. (Applause.)