

**Welcoming Remarks &
Reflections on 9/11
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**Conference on terrorism, Security, and America's Purpose:
Towards A More Comprehensive Strategy**

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Thank you very much, Steve [Clemons]. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund is very pleased to be one of the sponsors of this important and timely conference on the eve of the 4th anniversary of 9/11. I want to congratulate the New America Foundation – and especially you, Steve and your team – for assembling such a large and distinguished gathering – from the US and abroad – to examine honestly and deeply where we are four years after 9/11 – and where we're headed.

We are here in the immediate aftermath of one of the most deadly natural disasters in our history. Our hearts go out *for* those who have perished and *to* the survivors who have lost loved ones, homes, livelihoods, and entire communities. Our thoughts about the calamity would normally overwhelm a discussion of US global policy like this one. But this disaster puts into sharp focus some of the limits of our nation's current approach to global and homeland security. While we must respond compassionately and effectively to the victims of Katrina we must also get to work on the larger questions this tragedy puts before us. It is time to do the job of policy and planning.

In the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington four years ago, it became conventional wisdom that “9/11 changed everything.” In many ways it did. Terrorism has changed our self-perception as a nation – we now feel vulnerable, not invincible. It has re-ordered our domestic and foreign policy priorities. It has altered our relationships—with other nations, and with international institutions. It has deeply affected American politics. But paradoxically, it has not yet inspired us to fundamentally re-think our role in the world.

Over the past four years, numerous conferences have been organized here and abroad to examine how best to create a safer world with fewer terrorists. What makes this gathering different is its very real *potential* to break new ground—not only because of the outstanding and diverse group of participants in this hall, but particularly because the conference is *purposefully* designed to challenge us to think about terrorism within a larger context that too often is missing from these kinds of discussions – the context of America’s overall purpose, and where American strategy is headed in our increasingly interconnected world of the 21st century.

The need for this bigger context is crucial. In the *absence* of a national conversation and consensus on America’s purpose in the world, the war on terrorism has *become* America’s purpose by default. Employing the metaphor of “war” limits how we think about the larger challenges and leads us to reach reflexively for military responses.

As a result, the “war on terrorism” has substituted for a broader strategy for US leadership. Furthermore, many Americans now look at *all* foreign policy issues through a lens of fear, terror, and military action. But as Public Agenda’s new Confidence in Foreign Policy Index suggests, large segments of the public are growing increasingly uncomfortable with key elements of our foreign and security policy and restive for change.

This conference is an opportunity for us to ask ourselves honestly not how much HAVE we changed since 9/11, but how much MUST we change going forward. I believe that without a broader consensus around a more comprehensive strategy for the US role in the world, our efforts to thwart *terrorism* will flounder because we will fail to weaken the attractive power of *terrorists*, and because we will not attract global support for our policies.

Change must begin with a commitment to foreign policy that is forward-looking, systemic, cooperative, and long-term. Our adversaries have clearly demonstrated their ability to think holistically and to plan patiently for payoffs years in the future. But we – for too long before 9/11 and far too long in the aftermath – have conducted foreign policy from crisis to crisis and election to election. We are *capable* of doing better and we must.

In the years ahead, we will need effective approaches that connect the dots among multiple global issues, driving forces and trends...

- between global support for U.S. policies and global appreciation of American ideas...
- between the health of our economy at home and the projection of our power abroad...
- between the policy choices we make and the life choices that lead young people to accept or reject American ideals...

Moreover, without a clearer sense of purpose, a comprehensive strategy, and international teamwork, we are far less likely to succeed in meeting other global threats to human security and prosperity; and to the sustainability of our planet – from the spread of deadly weapons, to global warming, the spread of deadly disease, and the persistence of pernicious poverty.

As Americans grow increasingly concerned and eager for change, we must bring the public into genuine dialogue about our role in the world and the broad nature of the challenges and choices ahead, beginning with terrorism – and going beyond.

Once again, I commend the New America Foundation for providing an extraordinary opportunity for the kind of long-term, big thinking that we often find missing in policy debates—especially those on terrorism. This conference provides a great opportunity to widen the lens, to think ahead, and to work together to forge new possibilities.

I hope that this conference launches a new, sustained, national conversation about the world we face and our national purpose. I hope that all of us will approach the complex topics on the agenda with a willingness to look honestly at where we are and with an openness to bold thinking. This is the defining challenge of our generation.