



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – National Security Strategy

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**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich  
“Building a Safer World:  
A Broader Vision of National Security”  
at Canberra University**

*(As prepared for delivery – June 25, 2010)*

Thank you, peter. It is a pleasure to be here today and to have an opportunity to speak with you on such an important topic.

First let me address the events of the last couple days. There's an old saying by Winston Churchill

A politician needs the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen.

I think that pretty much sums it up.

I have reached out to both former Prime Minister Rudd and the new Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Prime Minister Rudd has been a good friend and I've thanked him for his commitment to the partnership between our two countries and international leadership on economic and security matters. I also congratulate our friend, Julia Gillard, on becoming Australia's first female Prime Minister. She is now the 15th Prime Minister to our 13th President since the ANZUS treaty, and I am confident that under her leadership, the U.S. Australia relationship will remain as strong as it's ever been. The most important point is that our relationship transcends party or personality because it is built on things that do not change: a foundation of shared values and deeply held beliefs in democracy, freedom and justice.

Now the other recent news that I should address up front concerns events in Afghanistan. This is an important and difficult period in Afghanistan. We are currently working together – the U.S. and Australia and our partners – to ensure we consolidate our gains in Uruzgan province and are prepared to assume additional responsibilities if the Dutch leave. We have been building for the offensive against Kandahar for the past several months and we know that this will be a painful but necessary period, in which our nations will be making great sacrifices. And this week, the president needed to make the hard but correct choice to replace the U.S. ISAF commander, General Stanley McChrystal. As the



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president said yesterday, however, we have an outstanding leader in General Petraeus to assume that command, and our strategy and our goals in Afghanistan remain clear and unchanged. General Petraeus will take command in Afghanistan to maintain our momentum and provide the military leadership we need to succeed.

These past two weeks we received another sobering reminder of the terrible sacrifice that is required, and the threats we still face. I want to express my heartfelt condolences to all of Australia, but particularly to the families of the five brave Australian soldiers who lost their lives over the last two weeks in Afghanistan. Their efforts will not be in vain. And it is the purpose behind those sacrifices that I would like to address today.

In the wake of World War I, the poet WB Yeats wrote: “all changed, changed utterly.” The threats that people imagined until then had been wars by one nation against another, not world wars in which groups of nations allied against others fought for world domination, employing radical new technologies like mustard gas and aerial fighter planes and dynamite.

In the last two decades a similar thing has happened. The world has changed utterly. We have gone 65 years without a world war, and we have gotten better at containing nation against nation conflicts. But a new different form of threat has emerged which is not nation against nation, but criminal network against nation. The enemies are not nations with borders and uniforms and governments who can surrender and sign treaties and redraw boundaries and end the conflict. They are criminal networks with no fixed location, unbounded by rules of war, using new tools and technologies as well as new ways of employing old tools against civilians.

The attacks are not against a particular nation, but against all nations that share certain western values around the world, with attacks in New York and Bali and Mumbai. It is against this backdrop that this year President Obama announced a new national security strategy that acknowledges this reality, and calls upon us all to broaden our concept of what security means and the tools required to confront these new challenges.

Historically, security has been a subject reserved to military planners and the intelligence community. But in today’s world we are as exposed and threatened to criminal forces by economic insecurity or energy insecurity as we are the use of destructive weapons.

Too often the government can operate like a university. Different subjects are often kept within different departments. You might study history for 40 minutes, then move to English class, then onto a foreign language. The biology faculty might have offices in one building, and political science might be in another. They might talk from time to time, but probably not as often as they should. This is fine when you are dealing with the sorts of issues that are largely contained within one discipline.



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But matters of security are not simply an issue of military strategy or intelligence gathering or diplomacy. If our economy depends upon fuel supplies that we can't access or control, if our or other countries' use of energy destroys jobs and quality of life and threatens our health and existence, if popular commodities like the internet can be used to launch cyberattacks or commit crimes, if water shortages or unrest may dislocate thousands and millions of people, if diseases can circle the planet as quickly as a plane flight, and if criminal networks exist that seek to exploit all of these – then our security is a problem that requires effort from all sectors -- scientists, industry, economists, sociologists, linguists, engineers – and all disciplines. We need the whole university to work together. The same is true when it comes to national security.

There is no doubt that the military will remain the cornerstone of our national defense. But our military leaders are the first to tell us that military force cannot solve every problem that confronts us. We must recognize that it is impossible to divorce our national security from economic, environmental, and political problems around the world. To make ourselves safer, we must confront those problems in new ways: with economic planning, aid and development to struggling nations, improved law enforcement, and smart domestic policy about the energy we use and we use it.

Now since becoming ambassador I have learned that the government loves two things above all else, acronyms and alliteration, so to put it another way we have to pursue defense, diplomacy, and development all at once.

The U.S.-Australia relationship itself maps and reflects this evolution in our understanding. In the beginning, ours was primarily a military partnership. Over time we realized that just military cooperation was not enough to keep us safe. We began to cooperate in the economic sphere, in development programs overseas, and within international organizations. We found that we could do more working together than either of us could alone. But our relationship to promote our mutual security and prosperity grew into much more than just a military alliance. Today you would be hard pressed to find a major issue where there is not some cooperation between us, and our countries are better off because of it.

In his recent commencement speech at West Point, I think the president said it best; the way to ensure our national security is to "shape a world that is more peaceful and prosperous." Less conflict and less people living in poverty means a more stable and secure world. We will always need our military to keep us safe from attack, but the diplomats who resolve conflicts before they become wars and the development workers who build up struggling economies are just as important. The President recognizes that America's strength is based in equal measure on security, prosperity, and values. Without any one of these three factors, Americans will be less safe.



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Let me talk briefly about each of those three things,

First, security. The president's most sacred responsibility is to keep Americans safe from attack. To do so we must recognize that the gravest threat to our safety now comes not from another state, but from a criminal network. This means – as we have in Afghanistan – changing the way that we think about war and adopting new tactics.

The United States is currently engaged in two major conflicts; the Iraq war, which President Obama and our allies are moving to a responsible end, and the war against the Al-Qaeda network and its affiliates. We are not at war with terror or terrorism. Terrorism is a tactic and a means to an end, not an enemy. To say that we are at war with terrorism is akin to saying that we are at war with missiles. Likewise, the United States is not at war with Islam or even Islamic extremism. We and the nations around the world that have been attacked were attacked by Al-Qaeda and other organizations which share the desire to take down westernized governments. Our goal is to disrupt, dismantle and defeat those groups.

The United States and Australia are not alone in this effort. We have been joined by over 60 countries from around the world. In any future conflicts, and in our normal interactions with the world, we will continue to seek broad international support. In doing so, we must strengthen old alliances that have been effective since World War II and reach out to developing powers in the hopes of building new partnerships. When possible, we will work within international organizations, but we must also reform and strengthen those organizations so they are better able to deal with the challenges we face. The only way we can ever be more secure is if we find ways to have more friends and fewer enemies.

Even as the United States is fighting two conflicts, war is never our first choice. We all must agree on this simple point: that it is better to solve a problem without violence than with violence. While it may become necessary to defend the American people or our allies with military force, we will pursue all other options before doing so. Should war become necessary, the United States will conduct itself in a way that reflects our values and adheres to international standards.

I would like to read a quote from a famous American, "there must be effort of the spirit — to be magnanimous, to act in friendship, to strive to help rather than to hinder. There must be effort of analysis to seek out the causes of war and the factors which favor peace, [for it is on] those great undertakings . . . Which world equilibrium will depend." This quote is from General George Marshall, the chief of staff of the army during World War II. During his tenure, Marshall dramatically increased the size of the army and laid the foundation of the modern force, he was at the president's side during the darkest days of the war, and he planned the invasion of Europe that helped to turn the tide. Had his



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career ended there, Marshall would be remembered as a great general. But as you can see from that quote, he understood that the measure of success in any battle is the peace that follows. To end a war you must defeat your enemy, but to prevent the next war you have to make sure that you have resolved the issues that prevent former enemies from living together in peace. A few years later as Secretary of State, Marshall gave his name to the Marshall plan, which rebuilt Europe and brought an end to centuries of conflict in the western half of the continent.

To prevent future wars and unrest, it is imperative that we build a more prosperous world. Without question, two of those "causes of war" that general Marshall referred to are poverty and economic instability, which inevitably lead to political instability. This is why much of the Marshall plan focused on modernizing Europe's economy. When people do not share in the benefits of globalization they become angry and aggressive. We need to sustain the recovery of the international economy, and ensure that more people share in the benefits of economic development.

At home, the United States has weathered the global financial crisis and emerged bruised, but not broken. Restoring our economy is essential to our future national security. A strong economy is the foundation of American leadership in the world. Whether it was inventing the assembly line or putting a man on the moon, innovation has always been the foundation of U.S. economy. Therefore, it is important that we invest heavily in education and the sciences to build the workforce we will need to be competitive into the future. This will not benefit America alone. A robust U.S. economy will help stabilize the international economic system.

The second problem we must address is the poverty that exists around the world. As we have become more interconnected over the past several decades, emerging economies have lifted countless people out of poverty, but too many have been left behind. When people do not feel they are benefitting from globalization, they may lash out, causing problems that range from civil unrest to terrorism. As two countries that have benefitted from globalization, it is important the United States and Australia work together to make sure that more people share the benefits and fewer are marginalized.

Finally, our national security policy must be based on our values. The United States is a model for many people around the globe because we represent freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. We should not be afraid to stand up for those values, and our policies should always reflect them. Honoring these values also makes us safer. When people are free to speak their mind and chose their leaders, they are less likely to resort to violence. We should not impose any system on another country, but we will be steady in our support for the values that America represents.



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As Martin Luther King Jr. said, injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere. When a regime denies the will of the people and ignores human rights, it denies the world of a legitimate partner. Regimes that trample on their own citizens at home do not have legitimacy on the world stage to address the major issues that affect us all. They become breeding grounds for terrorism like Afghanistan. They become threats to international peace and security like Iran and North Korea. They become vulnerable and costly, like post Duvalier Haiti. For that reason, it is not merely goodness that animates us. It is good common sense and pragmatism. We are committed to supporting political freedom, human rights, and the rights of women and minorities everywhere because it is the right thing to do and it is the best thing to do.

After listening to me go on for this long, you might be wondering what this all means for you. Why does all this talk of U.S. national security matter to Australia? I would offer two arguments: first, a safer world for the U.S. means a safer world for Australia. We are both developed democracies, and as such face similar issues. We both see nuclear proliferation and terrorism as major threats to international security. We both see the value of opening markets and increasing trade. What threatens one of our countries is almost sure to threaten the other as well. There is no doubt that eliminating those threats will make both the United States and Australia safer.

Second, the Australian-U.S. alliance is one of the closest in the world. Because of our shared values and views, we have cast our lot together. Our security is interlinked. When I talk about U.S. national security that includes the security of our allies, of which Australia is among the most important. We are safer together than we could be apart and we will have to work together to address all of the issues I have just outlined.

At its heart, President Obama's vision of national security is a bold call to action, not just for the United States, but for our allies and partners around the world. We need to take a longer view of national security than simply preventing an attack tomorrow, or next week or next year. We should not be content to react to the world as it is. We must have a clear notion of the world we want to live in, and we should work to build that world.

Just because this path will be difficult does not mean we shouldn't walk it. Many of our goals are decades from being realized, but if we don't start to work towards those goals today we will never get any closer to achieving them.

At the same time we reach for our aspirations, we must not be naïve. We have made tremendous progress since the end of the cold war, but the world of today still faces many threats. Even as we work to build a better world for our children and grandchildren, we must always consider the reality of the world we live in now. There are those who would take advantage of our good intentions. From my many discussions with the President, I can promise you that he is clear eyed about the difficulties ahead and resolute in



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confronting the world as it is today, even as he tries to build a more peaceful and humane tomorrow.

Now before I take your questions, I will leave you with this thought. In 1990, the spacecraft Voyager 1 had completed its journey through the solar system. Voyager 1 was launched in 1977, which makes it older than most of the people in this room. Having completed its primary mission, NASA turned the cameras around and took a picture of earth from the greatest distance it has ever been photographed. In the photo, our world appears as only a tiny speck of blue against the dark expanses of space. In one sense, the photograph makes our tiny planet seem pretty insignificant. But seen another way, it makes us seem very special. While it may not look like much in that photo, as far as we know there is no other place in the universe like Earth. It is our home and we are all neighbors sharing a relatively small piece of real estate. From that distance, we see how unique and precious our planet is. As Carl Sagan put it,

Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that in glory and in triumph they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of that dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of the dot on scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner of the dot. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. To my mind, there is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly and compassionately with one another and to preserve and cherish that pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

We need to "preserve and cherish that pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known." In outlining his vision of U.S. national security, President Obama is seeking not just to keep Americans safe, although that is important. He is calling on us to build a better world for everyone to live in. Maybe this is just one small step towards taking better care of that blue dot.

Thank you.