

**Richard N. Haass
Commencement Address**

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“Diplomacy in Today’s World”

Thank you President Stewart -- for that generous introduction, for inviting me here to speak, and for honoring me.

It is a true pleasure to return to Hamilton College to address the class of 2007. I want to congratulate the graduates – and urge you to thank those who made this day possible, most importantly your parents and your professors.

You are about to join the ranks of Hamilton alumni. You are stepping into big shoes. Hamilton has produced generations of graduates who have become leaders in their chosen fields. I’d like to take a moment to mention three out of the many:

Elihu Root is one of Hamilton’s most distinguished alumni – indeed, one of the most distinguished citizens in our country’s long history. Root was born here in Clinton, the son of a math professor at Hamilton. He became a successful lawyer and later served as both secretary of war and secretary of state. He dealt with diplomatic challenges as varied as self-government in Cuba and Japanese immigration to America. Root was the first president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the winner of the

1912 Nobel Peace Prize. He was also a leading figure in the Council on Foreign Relations, the organization that I now lead, from its birth in 1921.

The second Hamilton graduate I want to mention is Sol Linowitz. Sol gave a commencement address to the Hamilton class of 1935 – in Latin. It is good news for you – and better news for me – that we will not be attempting that today. Linowitz went on to become chairman of the board of Xerox and U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States. In 1977 he was appointed co-head of the U.S. negotiating team for the Panama Canal treaties. And two years later, he was named President Carter's representative to Middle East peace talks.

Sol Linowitz affected my life in many ways. When I served in the White House as principal Middle East adviser to the previous President Bush, it was Sol who picked up the phone during a time of great controversy to offer advice and support. He became my unofficial rabbi. Several years later, it was an honor and a treat for me to serve as the Sol Linowitz visiting professor here at Hamilton.

Finally, I would like to mention Arnold Raphel. Two years after graduating from Hamilton in 1964, Arnie joined the Foreign Service. He was a great friend of mine from our time together in the State Department in the 1980s. In 1987, President Reagan appointed him U.S. ambassador to Pakistan. But the next year, Arnie died in a plane crash in that country. He was a dedicated public servant who fit squarely in the best traditions of this college and our country.

Hamilton clearly has a history of inspiring its graduates to do important things in the world. One of those things, at which Root, Linowitz, and Raphael all excelled, is diplomacy.

This morning I would like to say a few things about the role of diplomacy in today's world. This subject may seem out of date. There are those who are tempted to think of diplomacy as something from the past, such as the Congress of Vienna that ended the Napoleonic Wars. Some see diplomacy as unnecessary for the United States today. Other countries may have to negotiate to protect their interests, they argue, but the most powerful country in the world can surely protect its interests alone. More positively, still others believe that diplomacy is unnecessary because the chance of conflict among the major powers today is so slim.

It is true that the chance of major war is slimmer than it has been for centuries, but this does not mean that diplomacy's time has passed. To the contrary. The lack of great power competition creates an opportunity for the United States to lead efforts to integrate other countries into common institutions and understandings that can tackle global problems. The notion of diplomacy as quaint, obsolete, or unnecessary is wrong: deeply, fundamentally, even dangerously.

We live in an age of globalization. I would define globalization as the increasing volume, speed, and importance of flows within and across borders of people, ideas,

greenhouse gases, manufactured goods, dollars, euros, television and radio signals, drugs, germs, e-mails, weapons, and a good deal else.

In such a world, every country, no matter how powerful, is vulnerable to transnational threats and dependent on others for essential goods, services, and support. Because of this, no country can consistently impose its will on others or insist on its own way.

Diplomacy matters.

But what is diplomacy? You know from your own lives that diplomacy is the effort to influence the behavior of others. It involves a mix of consultation, argument, and negotiation. Diplomacy can be backed by the threat of sanctions or military force. But its intent is to try to resolve differences through persuasion.

Many successes in history – conflicts ended or averted, common challenges met, dangerous behavior changed – have come through diplomacy.

I served as U.S. envoy to the peace process in Northern Ireland for three years, from 2001 through 2003, so I am more than a little familiar with this example. In Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics recently agreed to work together in one government, and a land once known for terrorism and strife is now marked by peace and possibility.

This did not come about on its own. It required negotiations that covered every point of contention and that lasted nine years from the signing of the Good Friday Accord of

1998. And the Good Friday Accord itself came only after years of talks and decades of violence.

The Northern Ireland peace process has many lessons to offer for diplomatic interventions in other conflicts around the world.

First, diplomacy is a policy tool, not a favor to the other side. We must get past the idea that negotiations constitute a reward.

Second, we must avoid undue emphasis on preconditions. What matters in a negotiation is not where you start, but where you end. In Northern Ireland, a cease fire was required for talks to begin and to continue. But other steps, such as the parties' giving up their arms, were achieved through negotiation, not set as preconditions. Had they been, the talks may never have begun.

Third, negotiations must have realistic goals or they cannot succeed. In Northern Ireland, no one demanded that Catholics or Protestants give up their dreams, be it of a united Ireland or of continued union with the United Kingdom. They were allowed to keep these dreams, which they can now pursue through a democratic political process.

Fourth, it is sometimes hard to stop a war unless you talk to those involved. It may seem counter-productive to bring those associated with violent groups into negotiations. But

though their involvement may slow progress for a time, the participation of the core protagonists will lend eventual agreements more support and staying power.

Finally, negotiations do not depend only on the leaders at the table. They also depend on the context in which those leaders are operating. That is why it is essential to reach out to the public, preparing people for what can and cannot be accomplished in negotiation. Only then will the public be open to the idea that even partial success is preferable to continued armed struggle, and only then will political leaders be in a position to survive their compromises.

In the Middle East, strenuous efforts over many years have been unable to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a close. But there have been achievements in that region. Israel has made enduring peace with both Egypt and Jordan. The Madrid Conference of 1991, which under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union brought together Israelis and Arabs in face-to-face talks for the first time, was another diplomatic milestone.

And while we're on the subject of the Soviet Union, diplomacy was what helped to keep the Cold War cold. Arms control agreements, discussions to resolve the Berlin crisis, the Helsinki process to promote stability in Europe – these and other efforts helped to avert nuclear catastrophe. Negotiations also brought about an international trade system that is essential to American and global prosperity, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, which support countries in financial distress and provide money for development.

Despite these successes, all of us can see diplomacy's limitations. Israelis and Palestinians are far from a peace deal, or even from serious negotiations. Iran continues to defy demands to open its nuclear program to intrusive inspections and renounce the enrichment of uranium. And Iraq, the most salient foreign policy venue for the United States today, remains dangerous, messy, and tragic.

For all its virtues, diplomacy is not a magic solution to all conflicts at all times. Not every situation is ripe for solution. Resolving conflicts requires not just the outlines of a framework and a process to broker one. It also requires leaders willing to compromise and able to sell that compromise to their domestic constituencies.

But a lack of ripeness does not justify inaction. Few situations get better with the passage of time alone; neglect more often than not proves to be malign.

Take the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. I believe President Bush should outline a clear set of positions on the principal issues that would inform any final peace accord. Here is what I would advocate. The territorial divide should reflect Israeli security and demographic realities but provide Palestinians compensation for departures from the 1967 lines.

Palestinian refugees should have the right to return to the new Palestinian state, one that would receive generous financial assistance. Palestinians would gain a foothold in Jerusalem and Muslims would gain authority over their holy places. Finally, Israel would

agree not to create new settlements or carry out targeted killings while this was being negotiated. In return, all armed attacks by Palestinians on Israel would need to stop.

A statement of such positions by President Bush would foster a climate more conducive to peace, either with new leaders or existing leaders adopting new positions. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas would thereby have the strength to challenge Hamas, arguing that he could deliver a viable state without violence. And an announcement by President Bush would change the debate in Israel.

Diplomacy is also one option for dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions. Some have suggested airstrikes that would aim to damage or destroy Iranian nuclear facilities. Others believe that we should accept an Iran that possesses nuclear weapons or could build them in short order. But either of these alternatives poses significant risks and costs.

Diplomacy is the best available course. We ought to try to reach an agreement where Iran would allow intrusive inspections of its nuclear facilities to demonstrate that it is not developing nuclear weapons or producing the fissile material they require. In exchange, Iran should be offered an array of economic, political, and security incentives. The offer should include an international proposal to give Iran the nuclear fuel it says it requires for power generation, but not direct access to or control of the fuel itself.

Negotiations with Iran may work. But even if not, they will help clarify the situation and the choices. And a good-faith negotiating effort would make it less difficult to rally support at home and abroad for an alternative course of action. We ought to pursue diplomacy with an intensity no less than that with which Iran appears to be pursuing its nuclear ambitions.

Diplomacy can even have a role to play amidst war. Here I speak of Iraq. Continuing U.S. involvement there must be premised on the notion that Iraq will remain a messy and divided country for years.

The best and most the United States can hope to achieve is to keep open the possibility of something approaching normalcy until Iraq's Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds are prepared to act more in national than in sectarian terms. Diplomacy is needed to help local political leaders try to forge agreement on the sharing of political and economic power. Regional diplomacy is also needed to influence the actions of Iraq's immediate neighbors, who are either making a difficult situation worse or not doing what they can to make a difficult situation better. Generals are the first to point out that this war cannot be won with arms alone. Here, diplomacy is not an alternative to force so much as its complement.

Diplomacy has another dimension aside from conflict resolution. It is also an essential tool for positive action to meet the kinds of global challenges we face today.

The threats let loose by globalization constitute the signature challenges of our era. Trade, pandemic disease, climate change, proliferation of nuclear and other dangerous materials – all are issues that know no borders and that require, by definition, collective responses. Unilateralism has no role here. Indeed, the United States can and should exercise leadership in tackling these global challenges. But leadership is the opposite of unilateralism. Leaders require partners. And partners only emerge from diplomacy.

Economics offers an important example. Trade and investment are the best way to integrate industrialized countries into an international system whose stability they have a stake in maintaining. Trade and investment are also the best way to help developing countries develop and, over time, can encourage them to become more open politically as well. All of this requires negotiated agreements.

Climate change is another example of the need for diplomacy. This subject goes beyond the environment and affects national security. Countries are unlikely to go to war over levels of greenhouse gas emissions. But they may well go to war over the results of climate change, including water shortages and large-scale human migration. Climate change will contribute to disease, extreme weather, challenges from insects that attack both food production and people, and the loss of arable land. In so doing, it will contribute to state failure, which in turn provides opportunities for activities such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and slavery that exploit sovereignty deficits.

The United States should develop guidelines for the period after 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires. It is essential that the United States be a full participant in any negotiations and any new regime. Some sort of carbon tax or cap-and-trade system will likely work best. And developing countries need to be a central (although not necessarily equal) participant in a post-Kyoto framework. Only a diplomatic effort holds out the possibility of slowing climate change.

I hope this reality will inspire some of you to become diplomats. If you do, there is no shortage of job possibilities, and no substitute for understanding other cultures, the history of different parts of the world, foreign languages, and the technical aspects of issues that interest you.

But my overall purpose is not to guide you down a particular career path. It is to push you to think about the world you are entering and about how it will affect you.

There are many ways to get involved in the world. The Foreign Service is only one. The military provides the backdrop for diplomacy. Intelligence officers generate the analysis used by diplomats. Historians and social scientists supply background on the peoples and situations with which diplomacy is concerned. Journalists report the news that shapes diplomacy's context.

You may not choose any of these careers. But all of you should become informed citizens and active participants in the world. Your government and the policies it adopts

will affect you. This is equally true if you pursue a career in the arts, the law, business, science, or professional football. Today's world is not like Las Vegas: what happens there will not stay there. Isolationism is no more an option for a citizen than it is for a country.

Let me end where I began, by recalling Hamilton's tradition. Great Hamilton graduates of the past – Root, Linowitz, Raphel, and many others – became deeply involved in their worlds, responding through diplomacy to the challenges and opportunities of their time. You have it in you to do the same.

Thank you.