

“What is Security, Anyway”

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As I ponder our national debates on the conflict in Iraq, on immigration, on our nation's security, I have some thoughts I hope will be useful.

These are huge topics, immensely difficult problems. We could discuss any one all day, and not come to agreement.

Yet they are joined at their root. It is that core issue of security I want to take up. And I do this with a hope, a hope that whether you are conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat, an ardent supporter of President Bush or a bitter critic, you will see that we as Americans all have a common interest.

That commonality of interest is in security for ourselves, our families, and our nation.

Therefore, what I am going to do is this:

- Define security.
- Put security into the American context.
- Discuss the Iraq war and illegal immigration with the goal of putting these two issues into the context of our national history and, thereby, of our national purpose in regards to our security.

In the end, my hope is that by understanding context and purpose, we can open the way to agreeing on how to resolve these problems.

Security

Let's start, then, with the concept of security. One of the fundamental requirements, in fact the absolute requirement, for a well-functioning civil society is security.

That may not be as physically evident today as it was in medieval Europe. As tourists, we find the French or Italian village huddled below the ruined castle charming. So are the old walled cities. But they once provided basic, physical security.

Security comes, really, in two forms. The first is *security from*, that is, protection *against* some threat. That's the security of the walls and the fortified castle.

The second is *security to*. “Security to.” What is it?

It is the essence of the freedoms on which this nation has grown and prospered. When the founders of this country adopted the Declaration of Independence 230 years ago this month, they said in words we all know by heart:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Now, we also know that many of these founders did not practice what they preached about securing rights to all. They held slaves. They had indentured servants. Just remember, the reality of life, events, and issues is very, very seldom clearly defined. Issues are complex, even mess. The pull and the push of life are the true constant.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. What does this mean? The goal of the Declaration of Independence, and later of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and other

constitutional amendments, is to create different kinds of security, security in the form of physical, political, economic, and religious freedoms.

There is, for example, the *security to* freely undertake economic activity, to seek to prosper in any legitimate form of work or investment. We call it “free enterprise.” That freedom to engage in economic activity is also the foundation of our highly prized freedom to govern ourselves.

The two freedoms are inextricably interwoven. So, too, are *Security from* and *Security to*. As a popular song of my youth says, “You can’t have one without the other.” There is a constant, even healthy, tension between the two.

Background

Let me lead us quickly through some history. Our current debates do not spring full-grown, like the goddess Athena from the head of Zeus, but are part of our history’s fabric.

I have two premises. The first is that America has always been pulled and pushed by the often contrary forces of idealism and pragmatism. The second is this: Because of our nation’s development, we constantly seesaw between our myth of American self-sufficiency and the reality of our interdependence with the outside world.

The idea that America is able “to go it alone” in assuring its *security from* and its *security to* is not new. It springs from the antipathy once held by many people for the Old World they fled. We wanted *security from* its injustices, its wars, its political and economic constrictions. The idea that we can go it alone in assuring our *security to* springs from our abundance of economic resources, and from the success of our free economy.

But the idea of American exceptionalism is not now, nor has it ever been, a true reflection of reality.

For example, from the first days of our country, we have been, to our good fortune, an *integral* part of the world economy—we have not “gone it alone.”

President Thomas Jefferson, the idealist, composed the opening statements of the Declaration of Independence. In theory, he also firmly believed in a weak central government that would provide Americans the security to live freely. The government that governs best governs least, a familiar refrain of today’s conservatives.

But after paring down the infant U.S. Navy, Jefferson the pragmatist launched us on our first foreign conflict. Our merchant ships, so important to developing our economy, needed *security from* the principalities of North Africa, the so-called Barbary Pirates.

Jefferson sent the Navy and the marines to the Mediterranean to combat the sultans, to enable our merchantmen to sail freely. And by the way, he acted without prior authorization from Congress.

Idealism and pragmatism.... Wherever you look in our history, the Presidents who have been notably successful have been the pragmatists on the national issues of *security from* and *security to*.

One president who was swayed by the mythology of American exceptionalism was William McKinley.

We went to war, a war without any strong purpose related to our security, to free Cuba from Spain. As an afterthought, we evicted Spain from the Philippines. And McKinley said: “When I realized the Philippines had dropped into our laps, I confess I did not know what to do with them.”

He quickly figured it out: "... there was ... he said ... nothing left for us to do but to take them, to educate the Filipinos, uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them...."

"And then I went to bed, and went to sleep"

To many Filipinos, however, freedom from Spain created the opportunity to govern themselves, to truly emulate our freedoms.

The United States bloodily repressed the insurgents. More than 4,200 Americans, 20,000 Filipino soldiers, and 200,000 civilians had been killed.

Even after the Philippines became independent, it continued to fight its own insurgents.... Some 300,000 Filipinos have died so far in rebellions that continue to this day. The Philippines is still struggling to create a secure civil society.

Woodrow Wilson

He stands out as an idealist. Yet Wilson's policy through most of World War One was one of *security from* involvement in the battles of the Old World. And it was the very practical matter of defending America's *security to* trade freely that sparked his decision to enter the war in 1917.

Then and only then did he have a grand vision: The United States would spread democracy and its freedoms, especially security to govern yourself, across Europe and into the Middle East.

As we well know, his vision shattered against the realities of Europe's obsession with achieving *security from* Germany. His vision shattered against that other reality of American society -- this deceptive feeling that we are not only an exception and better than any other nation or people, but that we can on our own ensure all our security needs.

Yet, we have never been as self-sufficient as appearance and mythology would lead one to believe.

Creating our industrial might depend on capital investments imported from France, Britain, Russia, and elsewhere.

Creating the extraordinary American economy depended on wave after wave of immigrants, leaving Ireland, Germany, China, Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Russia, all driven by a desire for the securities the United States offers.

(By the way, the 12 million immigrants who came primarily from Ireland and Germany from 1840 to 1870, about equaled the 12 million who are now here illegally, and were equally resented.)

Indeed, IF U.S. immigration law and its enforcement had been as strict in the 19th century as Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, chair of the House Immigration Reform Caucus and author of a new book *Mortal Danger*, would like to make it, his ancestors might well have never entered this country.

All right, to the point: The marvel of economic growth after World War Two required leadership from the United States.

We had relatively more power after World War Two than we have today and the threat from the Soviet Union to our security and to the security of Western Europe and Japan was absolutely greater than that of Islamic extremists. Yet, we have never been more successful than we were then in achieving *security from* as well as *security to*.

Our success resulted from very pragmatic responses by Roosevelt, Truman, Marshall, and Eisenhower to our and others' security needs. Truman and Marshall, in particular, had the

wisdom to allow the Germans and Japanese to develop civil societies that each fit with their history, and offered new security to their peoples.

Truman, and then Eisenhower, encouraged cooperation and built multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and its agencies in which the United States worked pretty much as an equal, not superior, partner to promote international security.

Immigration and Iraq

Now, today's problems of Iraq and illegal immigration

Let's start with immigration. Is it a problem of *security from* an alien hoard determined to destroy American freedoms?

Haven't we heard similar fears and similar prejudices expressed about the Irish, the Germans, the Italians, and others?

Let's actually deal with illegal immigration from an understanding that it results from the immigrants' desire to partake of our *security to*. They seek economic opportunity. They seek political freedom. It is their yearning for America's *security to* live freely that drives people to come here, even at the risk of their lives.

Our real challenge is to keep attracting young men and women, from south Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

We need this influx of new peoples, with new ideas and, yes, new cultures, just as we needed, and have immeasurably benefited from, past waves of immigrants. They will contribute greatly in keeping our economy growing, thereby strengthening both our *security from* foreign foes and our ultimate security--the security of our free society.

Iraq

Iraq....

Why does no one seem to have a good answer to how we bring this conflict to an end? Could it be because President Bush began by defining the mission solely as one of "security from?"

Could it be because we acted on the myth that the world's one superpower can do anything it wants without concern for others' equally strong views of what constitutes true security?

If some 50 years of U.S. stewardship in the Philippines, could not produce a peaceful civil society, how can we expect to accomplish that in a handful of years in the much more difficult circumstances of today's Iraq?

The mess of Iraq makes our friends and allies, the countries with which we have economic trading relations worth more than a trillion and half dollars a year, more concerned about the security of their access to Middle Eastern oil and natural gas than about the future of our mission in Iraq.

The answer to a relatively satisfactory result in Iraq lies, I am certain, in three things, each a matter of security, but none of them easy to achieve:

First, allow Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds to create a loose federation of their three regions. That could create a balanced framework of security for each group.

Second, involve Iraq's neighbors – Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia – in guaranteeing that federation, specifically, in guaranteeing each region a fair share of Iraq's oil wealth. That could create the basis of economic security.

Third, involve Europe, Japan, and China, all dependent on Middle Eastern oil and natural gas for their economic stability and for their security, in another layer of guarantees.

What the process requires is that the United States accommodate our policy and goals, to the security interests of all these other countries.

Conclusion

In sum, what I am recommending to your consideration is that we take account of our nation's history, of how our achievements in *security from* and *security to* have really been achieved.

That we understand how we are, at one and the same time, pulled by our ideals and pushed by reality. And that we balance the two pragmatically, pragmatism being one of our national strengths.

The reality is that we cannot secure the United States by walling ourselves in or walling the world out.

The reality is that our economy is inextricably intertwined with the economies of Europe, Japan, China, Mexico, Canada, and others. That interdependence is vital to our economic security.

The reality is that immigrants continuously inject great value into our economy and society.

The reality is we find strength in our diversity, in all the hyphenated Americans we have created--the Irish-Americans, the Asian-Americans, the Hispanic Americans.

The reality is that we succeed only by balancing *security from* and *security to*.
Our closing hymn, number 160 ...

“May, at last, we cease from warring, barriers of hate remove, and earth's riches freely sharing ... found the dynasty of love.”