

WIFA Remarks

Cosmos Club

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Thank you Ambassador Cefkin. Ambassador Connie Morella, Members of the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs, particularly our new members—welcome.

This is the first chance I have had to thank you for the honor of being your chairman. The honor is even greater for me in succeeding one of the most distinguished diplomats ever to serve our country—Ambassador Tom Pickering, now our Chair Emeritus.

In my many travels around the world as President of the National Democratic Institute and in government, I had many opportunities to observe and appreciate the work of the ubiquitous Tom Pickering. I first met him when he was Assistant Secretary for the Oceans, Environment and Science Bureau. There he became our expert on nuclear non-proliferation among other things.

Then I met him in El Salvador where he successfully helped end a civil war. I was with a congressional delegation to Jordan where he briefed our group and took us to the Golan Heights to view the Sea of Galilee and the border with Israel.

Then we met in other postings—in Israel and Russia. He served at the United Nations. We came together again when Madeleine Albright brought him out of retirement to serve as Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

No one has held more ambassadorships and presidential appointments. Tom Pickering is one of a kind and no one can replace him. I am pleased that he will remain with us as Chair Emeritus.

The topic today is “Diplomacy and Development: Related but Different Missions.” That is the title of a course I teach at Brown University.

What I want to do today is to explore briefly the consequences of the dismantling of USAID. Then examine the efforts by Congress and the State Department to salvage parts of the Agency’s programs. Then, finally, look into the future to anticipate what might be done to reconstruct what I consider to be a vital part of our national security system—the so-called third “D.”

Let me begin with a few personal reflections that will hopefully illuminate the topic.

First, I was very proud of becoming a Foreign Service Officer. I never intended to leave the Foreign Service when I came back to Washington from Spain on “leave without pay” to be

a foreign policy advisor/legislative assistant to Senator Thomas Eagleton. When I reported for duty, the Senate administrative office informed me that I would have to resign from the State Department if I wanted to work in the Senate.

I called my personnel officer and told him that I felt I had no choice but to keep my commitment to Senator Eagleton. I received a nice letter from the Director General apologizing for the mistake and telling me that I would be welcome back at a later date.

Five years later I returned as a Deputy Assistant Secretary; a few years later I was confirmed by the Senate to serve as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. Some of my old friends from my postings in Abidjan and Madrid, I'm sure were a bit skeptical about this meteoric rise!

But the story wasn't over. President Carter lost the election in 1980, and I might have been out on the street. But fate played another hand: the personnel officer who mistakenly sent me home from Madrid to work in the Senate was now the Director General of the Foreign Service.

Harry Barnes called me to tell me that he wanted to correct his mistake. He offered a Senior Executive Officer position as Dean of Professional Studies at the Foreign Service Institute.

That is where some of you first met me. Several of you may have passed through the A-100 course, the 6-month economics course or the 5-month Mid-Level course we created. I soon learned that FSOs, unlike military officers, don't like being sidelined in a training mode, unless it's to learn a new language.

I eventually left State, returning briefly to the Senate and then running a small NGO called the National Democratic Institute. Within two years at NDI, with a staff of 5, we sponsored two international election observer missions that had the effect of ending the presidencies of Ferdinand Marcos and Augusto Pinochet. Then the wall came down in Central Europe, and we were engaged in democratic transitions all over the world. Sean Carroll, seated today at the head table, was young program assistant in those days.

That experience taught me the vital importance of creating networks of trusting partners. NDI today, despite severe cuts in its budget, has friends all over the world eager to volunteer for its projects

When Bill Clinton was elected, I was asked to lead the transition team at the State Department. My attitude toward USAID at the time was somewhat typical of a State Department officer. That is why I am spending some time here describing my personal journey.

I knew generally what USAID did but had little real understanding of what it meant to achieve sustainability, or how the various sectors of a healthy society worked separately and together to reinforce development.

The CDC officer working on USAID's eradication of smallpox in Abidjan was a friend, and I admired that work. But I hadn't really thought much about how strategies were created with partners to achieve results. At State we had crises to resolve and we needed flexible resources. The timeframes for achieving results were short. There was little patience for long-term programs.

The career FSOs at State presented the transition team with a study calling for a post-Cold War reconfiguration of the foreign affairs agencies. They recommended the merger of the US Information Agency and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. They recommended **against** merging USAID, arguing that its management systems were too complex; very different from those at State.

I asked two longtime staffers from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to examine the study and make their own recommendations. They confirmed the findings of the earlier report.

After the transition, I was nominated to be Under Secretary for Management. I was briefed on the need to "surge"

resources into crisis situations. I learned that there were never enough resources to support the diplomatic mission.

I wasn't in that position for very long. Mitch McConnell was holding up all 5 of the Under Secretaries' confirmations to make the point that the Administration hadn't yet named an AID Administrator. That is when the White House asked me to become the nominee for Administrator of USAID.

When Secretary Christopher appeared before McConnell's subcommittee in February of 1993, he announced that I was to be nominated to be USAID Administrator. McConnell lifted his hold and that very day I became Under Secretary for Management. I can't say I got a lot done as Under Secretary, but I did end smoking in the cafeteria! And I learned a lot about the Department's management systems.

In part I relate this personal history to explain how the missions of State and USAID were related and yet different.

Both were based on perfectly legitimate and vitally important mission objectives: one to inform and promote an Administration's foreign policies, report on the policies pursued by foreign governments, influence those policies to the extent possible, promote American values and civil society—advocating for American business and labor and protecting citizen's traveling abroad.

The other—USAID’s-- was to help developing nations alleviate poverty, create viable healthcare, education and economic systems, care for the environment, mitigate the effects of climate change. Generally, to achieve a higher degree of peace and prosperity through effective, accountable governance and provide relief when natural or manmade crises threatened lives. Under the “3-D” concept of national security, the development “D” was charged with the **prevention** of conflict.

Both professions have a need for intercultural understanding, language skills and sector knowledge. There are many analytical and intellectual skills that both diplomats and development professionals possess.

And it also helps to know how international law and world order has evolved—and is devolving!

Perhaps most importantly, both State and USAID officers are trained to conduct themselves as professionals. That means being non-partisan when on the job. It means serving administrations of both political parties and providing the best advice to decision-makers as is possible.

Now let’s bring this up to date. USAID was “dismantled” overnight. It wasn’t phased out. It was destroyed. Elon Musk and the young DOGE staff never asked about the consequences of their actions. They just put USAID in the

“woodchipper.” That action was not only terribly consequential; it was cruel.

People around the world were denied vital medications without warning. Studies have shown that some 700,000 people have died, half of them children. You have all heard the stories, so there is no need to repeat them here.

As my Republican friend, Andrew Natsios, and I wrote in The Hill journal, of all the mistakes made by the Trump Administration, “none is more consequential over the long term to the health, safety and prosperity of the American people than the destruction of USAID.”

USAID still exists on paper, but an agency of some 10,000 staff now numbers about 700, half of whom are Foreign Service Nationals.

So, let’s look at what have we lost, what Congress has restored, and what the prospects are for full recovery of this vital tool.

No would argue that USAID was the perfect development agency. It may have been the best, but it wasn’t perfect! USAID uses American tax dollars and therefore Congress insists that it be accountable, frankly, in too many ways. Yet, it was a global leader, and it served America’s interests by being an expression of all that is good about our country.

The actions taken to demolish USAID, means that we have lost our capacity to lead—to convince other donors to contribute resources targeted at new viruses, or to address transnational challenges like climate change, food and water shortages and poverty-induced migration.

We have lost the opportunity to share technical knowledge that can accelerate development progress and preserve the resources that sustain life. Our contributions to agriculture research have saved the global wheat and sorghum crops from fast spreading diseases. Many projects in arid countries like Jordan help sustain water resources with waste- water treatment facilities that help preserve potable water and enable it to be reused for irrigation.

We have also lost the ability to respond in the aftermath of conflict, or to transitions such are happening now in Syria—and may happen in Venezuela, or Cuba, or Iran. Though it is rare that transitions forced at the end of a gun succeed!

After I was asked to be the nominee for USAID, I met with a career professional who had been elevated to Secretary of State in the final days of the George H. W. Bush Administration. Larry Eagleberger praised the Agency for its humanitarian relief and long-term development programs, but he regretted that there wasn't a capacity to help countries in post-conflict situations.

That conversation led me to create the Office of Transition Initiatives. We started with \$20 million transferred from our relief budget. With people on the Hill watching closely, we set up demobilization areas for former combatants in Mozambique and Angola. Supported demining operations in both places. Trained demobilized military in Haiti to be computer literate, farmers and other civilian professions. Created radio stations in Burundi and Rwanda that promulgated messages of peace and reconciliation. Trained people in Bosnia and other new democracies on how to organize political parties and how to run effective parliaments.

So now comes the \$64,000 question. Can the State Department take over the three parts of the USAID mission: humanitarian relief, transitional assistance and long-term development? The correct answer to that question can only come from a complete understanding of what is required in each of these elements and how they work together.

Today, the Administration is demonstrating that it has no desire to follow global guidelines for development work that have been developed over the years, most often with American leadership. For example, it was in large part due to US leadership that the Millennium Development Goals were created and then endorsed by the United Nations. The

successor Sustainable Development Goals have been renounced by the Trump Administration.

The international community endorsed “effectiveness” principles which guide donors and partners. These call for mutual accountability, local ownership and transparency.

Studies have shown that the combination of setting strategic global goals and effective methods for achieving them translate into achieving measurable results. That, in turn, produced more investment in official development assistance.

In the absence of US leadership, global ODA levels have fallen. We are consequently falling behind in dealing with transnational issues like migration, climate change, infectious disease, poverty alleviation and, indirectly, international criminal activity.

The Congress, recognizing the implications of the dismantling of USAID, has attempted to restore some of the funding. For example, 80% of global health funding has been restored as have some food aid programs. But how does one spend these resources without professional staff?

The Department is negotiating several healthcare compacts with government ministries. They will send money out directly to government health ministries. These Ministries are

supposed to provide a strategic plan detailing how the money will be spent. This will no doubt overwhelm most health ministries in developing countries. We are still waiting for most of these plans.

Decisions as to which countries receive these grants are apparently being made not on whether the country is facing serious infectious disease threats, but whether there is something in the deal for the United States. Rare earth minerals seem to be of special interest. In this transactional process, many of USAID's most effective NGO partners are being cut out of the action.

Meanwhile, lobbyists for certain countries are having a field day. Knowing someone with a connection to the White House is worth its weight in gold!

Congress is asking for information on these compacts within 15 days after they are signed. That is quite intrusive oversight, and it signifies a lack of trust.

Somewhat ironically, I fear that the Department is setting itself up for charges of "waste, fraud and abuse." More importantly, fewer people will receive quality health care and very little sustainable development will occur.

A final word. It is my belief that a future Administration that wishes to engage in cooperative efforts to mitigate the problems that derive from poverty—an Administration that sees both diplomacy and development as vital tools to create peace and prosperity—will be able to rebuild this capacity. But with great difficulty.

The choices are 1. build it inside the State Department, or 2. create a new government department that pulls all development and humanitarian elements together from around government thus making a more strategic impact on poverty and its ills. That would include the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Development Finance Corporation. You guessed it--that is my preference.

If this entity were to be built within State, there must be a firewall around resources to be used for long-term development. The criteria for ODA should be those defined by the Sustainable Development Goals and the effectiveness principles. The bureaus that undertake development, transitional assistance and humanitarian relief should come under a Deputy Secretary on the organizational chart.

I apologize if I have gotten too much into the weeds, but I don't want these concerns and ideas to die. I came into government like many of you inspired by the words of John F.

Kennedy. It is therefore fitting to end this with a few from his announcement at the creation of USAID:

“...in full awareness of the many eyes upon us--the eyes of other industrialized nations, awaiting our leadership for a stronger united effort--the eyes of our adversaries, awaiting the weakening of our resolve in this new area of international struggle--the eyes of the poorer peoples of the world, looking for hope and help, --and, finally, the eyes of the American people, who are fully aware of their obligations to the sick, the poor and the hungry, wherever they may live. Thus, without regard to party lines, we shall take this step not as Republicans or as Democrats but as leaders of the Free World. It will both befit and benefit us to take this step boldly. For we are launching a Decade of Development on which will depend, substantially, the kind of world in which we and our children shall live.”

As may be the case of many in this room, I was inspired by Kennedy's words to pursue a career in public service.

[Now, if you will bear with me, I would like you to watch a video by a partner in Indonesia who wanted to thank USAID for its role in his country.]

