



## **2011 Foreign Policy Initiative Forum on Maintaining America's Global Responsibilities in an Age of Austerity**

December 13

### **Iraq**

"It's a bit of a presumption for Obama, who as a Senator opposed President Bush's surge of troops to Iraq, to subsequently claim victory in Iraq". – Senator John McCain

"Having no follow-on [security agreement] is a strategic blunder, in my opinion." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"Who's the biggest winner of the vacuum [in Iraq created by American withdrawal]? Iranians." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"[The President] put politics ahead of what's right for our country in both instances. If you were serious about strategy, you wouldn't do it in the middle of the fighting season." – Senator Kelly Ayotte

"The United States has spent too much blood and treasure for the country [Iraq] to fail." – Governor Tim Pawlenty

### **Afghanistan**

"My hope is that in the long term we think outside the box and encourage India to have military cooperation with Afghanistan." – Senator Mark Kirk

[Responding to a question on the Administration's signal to drawdown troops]  
"Afghanistan is ground zero. Are we prepared to let the country become a safe haven again? I think not." – Senator Kelly Ayotte

"We're losing internationally our messaging but also losing our messaging domestically." – Rep. Adam Kinzinger

"If the United States were to withdraw troops without securing stability [in Afghanistan], America would leave prime breeding ground for insurgents and terrorists to re-inhabit and plan further attacks against the West." – Senator Marco Rubio

"There is a human element to this story,...[discussed the case of an Afghan girl who was sold into slavery and mutilated by her own family]...There is a geopolitical element [to the conflict in Afghanistan], but people are also just trying to live their lives." – Rep. Adam Kinzinger

"Is the mission an over-the-horizon CT [counter-terrorism] mission? Or is it something more complicated? The United States needs to remain in Afghanistan, more than an over-the-horizon CT mission for the time being, to make sure that it's an 'away game' in the War on Terror, not a 'home game'." – Senator Mark Kirk

## **Defense Spending**

When asked whether the United States could have avoided sequestration: "We could have [avoided it], we need to [avoid it], and we will [avoid it]." – Senator Kelly Ayotte

With deep defense cuts looming due to sequestration, "the United States may end up with the smallest Navy since 1914, the smallest ground forces since 1940, and the smallest air force in our history." – Senator Kelly Ayotte

"We're trying to come up with an alternative to the \$600 billion sequester on defense that's in the offing. We're still educating our voters that money spent on defense is well spent." – Senator John McCain

"The solution [on defense cuts] is that you don't destroy the finest military that the world has ever seen for no good reason...[N]ational security is the number one priority of the United States." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"Always identify the problem. In the 1990s, we cut so drastically, so fast that we thought this was the dividend of the Cold War...I think we paid a heavy price for that...We drastically reduced our ability for what's called HUMINT, or human intelligence...But after 9/11, we had to recreate whole parts of the intel industry to meet the current threat." – Rep. Mike Rogers

## **Foreign Aid**

"If we abandon the civilian side of what we can do to shape the world, then we will be in a worse position...Yes, we can talk about foreign aid as something that needs to be reformed. But don't give the illusion that we can be safer by disengaging from the world." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"There's this urban legend out there that somehow, if we just eliminated foreign

aid, we'd have all the money we need to wipe out our debt. Foreign aid is a very small -- it's a significant number of dollars, no doubt about it, and one dollar of waste is too much. But if you wiped out all the foreign aid in the world, you wouldn't notice it in terms of the debt conversation, and the cost analysis would be very heavy because in addition to being unable to promote values around the world, foreign aid, from a practical point of view, is our leverage around the world." – Senator Marco Rubio

"Foreign aid is not simply a blank check dispersed to countries in the hopes that they would support the U.S...Foreign aid is an investment to advance American interests and improve the livelihood of others. While foreign aid constitutes a minute portion of total federal spending, it serves a practical means of leverage to improve and advance American policy with regimes that are sometimes hostile towards Washington without resorting to armed conflict." – Senator Marco Rubio

## **Russia**

"I think this a corrupt system--an oligarchy...This is a kleptocracy. It's certainly not a representative government." – Senator John McCain

"[The Russian reset was] naive and has been a failure." – Governor Tim Pawlenty

"What we know is when one deals with a bully--and Putin is a bully--they only respect strength." – Governor Tim Pawlenty

"I think one of the most underestimated threats to-- not [just] the future of the United States-- but to our role in the world, is a resurgent Russia. I think it's something that's not getting enough attention in my mind. When you really see where the Russians were, what they talked about ten years ago, to where they are today, and you see the evolution of Russian nationalism again and the invasion in part of Georgia...I think we are finding ourselves in a situation where it's going to be important to at least engage the Russians but understand their interest may not -- to come to the realization that their interest may not be ours, and understand that I think they want nothing more than a world with two leaders, they being one of them." – Rep. Adam Kinzinger

## **Arab Spring**

"The United States should be clearly on the side of the civilian demonstrators, as a post-Assad Syria would be a blow to Iran's regional strategic interests, and the United States would again be demonstrably on the side of people aspiring to live in freedom." – Senator Marco Rubio

"I'm not of the opinion that the election of Islamists is the death knell for the Arab Spring." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"When Bashar al-Assad goes, that'll be a huge blow to Iran, and a huge blow to Hezbollah." – Senator John McCain

"Transitions from tyranny to democracy cannot be done smoothly overnight, and can result in illiberal outcomes, [as was the case in the 2005 Palestinian elections]...but democratic forces would ultimately prevail." – Governor Tim Pawlenty

## **Iran**

"I think the idea of Iran having a nuclear capability is so horrifying, that there's virtually no realistic option that should be taken off the table." – Senator Marco Rubio

"We cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon, in my view...The next president will likely have to confront this issue. In my view, the military option has to remain on the table. If there is a plausible way to defeat their intentions, it should be explored. If a President lets Iran get nuclear weapons, that would be malfeasance in office of an historic magnitude." – Governor Tim Pawlenty  
Asia

"It's widely regarded in Asia that we've taken important steps to make clear that we think much of the important developments in the world in the 21st century will take place in Asia." – Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell

"Any sense that we're not fulfilling our commitments will be read as a sign of weakness, and that's not in our interest...The most important thing for the United States is to ensure is a strong position in the Asia-Pacific region." – Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell

"At a strategic level, one of the most important things for Americans to understand about Asia is that every country in Asia wants a better relationship with China. But what countries also want is a good relationship with China...They believe that a better, long-term relationship with the United States helps them to

deal with the giant in the region." – Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell

"The Arab Spring has already come to China, and the Chinese junta realizes that. If they're so smart, if they're so wise, then why in the hell are they trying to prop up North Korea?" – Senator John McCain

### **America's Role in the World**

"People throughout the world look up to America's example. Our challenge is to be worthy of it" – Senator John McCain

"I embrace the fate of America to lead the free world. I embrace it and I'm proud of it." – Senator Lindsey Graham

"In America, what happens around the world affects our daily lives. What happens halfway around the world impacts every aspect of our lives" – Senator Marco Rubio

"We can pretend that we're Luxembourg, but we're not. There is no replacement for the United States." – Senator Marco Rubio