The Purpose of Public Service

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How do you have the skills to actually turn your ideas into action? In every public service success, leadership requires the vision of a better future, where the purpose of public service is made plain in the circumstances of the moment, a clear understandable plan to realize that vision, and the ability to actually implement the changes, if at all possible, by the inclusion of all the stakeholders the process. This is becoming more important than ever before in an interdependent world. Whether we like it or not, inclusive politics is necessary to have inclusive economics, and inclusive discussion with various stakeholders is necessary to affect positive social change. Asia has three interesting, very vigorous leaders at the moment, and the president of China, President Xi, who's trying to grow the Chinese economy internally more by resuming population growth, by modifying the one-child policy, and trying to eliminate some of the corruption that has been endemic to the system. And Prime Minister Abe of Japan, who is trying to overcome his own country's reluctance to alter their culture by allowing widespread immigration, by putting more women into the workforce, and enabling people to work longer. And Prime Minister Modi of India, who has written a book called Inclusive Politics, Inclusive Governance, and who recognizes that his country's big problem is it has grown like crazy for the last 20 years in and around its tech prosperity centers, but only 35% of the people are being reached by that effort, and that India needs to develop the ability to aggregate and deploy capital so that 100% of the people of India can have a chance to benefit from the enterprise that is now driving dramatic prosperity for just 35% of them.

So this inclusion issue is going to become bigger and bigger and bigger in the lifetime of the students who are here. But let me try to illustrate the success of leadership and the pitfalls with a few recent examples. Recent in my terms, not to students' terms. Helmut Kohl was the Chancellor of Germany when the Berlin Wall came down. He had a vision, borne of a lifetime of experience that included obviously living through World War Two, of a united peaceful and prosperous Germany in a united, democratic, peaceful Europe. Both these developments may seem normal to you. They were virtually unimaginable for most of European history, in which Germany was not a separate country, but a collection of city-states, and then united under Bismarck. Kohl became the second longest-serving chancellor in German history in the pursuit of his vision, second only to Bismarck. And he had a strategy, which he pursued with extraordinary discipline. It was first to unite Germany and for the wall to come down, which required very large transfers of money from West

Germany to East Germany to begin the long process of equalizing the economic opportunities on both sides of the former divide. Second, to expand and strengthen the European Union. He wanted all of Central and Eastern Europe to come into the EU, so that Germany would be in the middle of Europe, not on the edge where it had been a source of instability and conflict throughout the 20th century. Third, he wanted to expand NATO and strengthen the transatlantic ties of the United States because he thought that was important to building a prosperous democratic future for Germans and to the rest of Europe. And fourth, often forgotten, he became the most vigorous supporter of Russia after the end of Communism, its economic recovery, its democracy building, and its increasing cooperation with the EU and the US. It's hard to believe given today's headlines, but that was the order we were all trying to build then in the 1990s, and it worked for quite a while.

In the beginning, it worked very well, but there were two central problems with implementing Kohl's vision after he left office. One is that much of the European Union, although not every member, adopted the euro as a currency. They had a Eurozone currency, which was adopted before those in the Eurozone had a common economic policy, common social policy, and a common public investment policy. Which meant it worked great when Europe was growing wealth and Greeks could borrow money at German interest rates essentially, but when the economy turned down, it no longer worked very well, partly because the German voters didn't understand how much gain they had gotten out of all those good years when Greece and Spain and Portugal and Italy got to borrow money at common interest rates and buy German exports. And Germany is, by the way, still the number one rich country in the world in the percentage of its GDP tied to exports and tied to manufacturing. In no small measure but a good lesson for the United States because of its dramatic success in involving small- and middle-sized businesses in the export market, having a continuous lifetime training program, and having a program that pays employers to keep people working instead of paying unemployed employees unemployment benefits. So it worked fine, but when Greece failed and Ireland failed and Spain had skyrocketing unemployment, all for slightly different reasons, although basically was just a real-estate boom going bust in Ireland and Spain, and Portugal and Italy had their own troubles, the automatic response of the EU was to try to impose austerity on Greece because they had governments that had for years made promises to people they couldn't keep, and because they had a country in which rich people didn't pay taxes. In fact, constitutionally the shipping companies are exempted from taxes, something a lot of people don't know. So that if you were a cab driver in Athens or a fisherman in the Aegean, you felt like a chump if you did pay your taxes.

But Greece began a program of austerity in 2009. When they started, their public debt was 120% of GDP. Today they made all these payments and their public debt's about 180% of GDP. Which means that the fundamental laws of economics have not been repealed. If inflation is lower than interest rates, there's insufficient demand and more austerity will get you in a deeper hole, not get you out of it. So, that happened, and there was no provision made at the creation of the Eurozone for how to get out without collapsing the whole, or without spooking the markets, and that was probably an error. If they weren't prepared to have common economic and social policy and some sort of investment, they should have

made an exit strategy part of the beginning, then the market hazards wouldn't have been so great. The typical thing for a little country, the kind of trouble that Greece is, is to devalue, take all the hard medicine, then start growing again. That's what Iceland did, which is not in the Eurozone. Iceland wasn't a particularly tragedy. Its banks were far more leveraged in American banks, but they also had more self-made millionaires, mostly in tech and retail businesses as a percentage of their population than any other European country. So they devalued and started building again and got out of this mess they were in in a hurry. So that doesn't mean that Kohl's European idea was wrong. It doesn't and the EU and the strengthening of it and for many older Europeans, even the boring and bureaucratic nature of the cumbersome machinery in Brussels of the EU, is a godsend, far better than uncertainty and war and endless intrigue with destructive consequences. The other thing that happened to Kohl's vision, of course, is that Russia took a more unilateral and authoritarian turn as manifest most vividly in what happened in Ukraine and what continues to happen there. But on balance, you would have to say he was the most important European leader since World War Two, because of the good things that happened and the bad things that didn't happen, and I still believe over the long-run we will return to the path that he advocated for so long.

Second example, Lee Kuan Yew, the founding prime minister of Singapore, recently passed away at 91, and I was asked along with Henry Kissinger and Tom Donilon to represent the United States at his funeral because I had known him and had a lot of contact with him and so I went. When Lee took office more than 50 years ago in 1962, he was the leader of a small city-state of a few million people with a per capita income of under $1,000 a year. It had recently broken off from Malaysia and there was a lot of uncertainty about two things. One was whether this little city-state that was heavily majority Chinese with a big Malay minority and a smaller but still noticeable Indian minority and then Filipinos and others in this diverse state could ever make a go of it, and two, whether a state that small could withstand the debilitating consequences of the corruption which was then endemic to most of the Asian rising countries. Lee had a strategy. First, his vision was to have a prosperous, unified, secure nation, and he knew that Singapore had the most important thing of all at the time he came of age, location. It was located at a critical juncture for all the major sea lanes in Asia. He knew the Asian economy was going to boom and he wanted to be there. So his strategy was, first, to govern Singapore on terms of equal treatment for all its citizens without regard to their ethnic background. There were 10 speakers at his funeral. His son, the Prime Minister, spoke first about his leadership. His second son spoke last about what a good father he was. In the middle, there were representatives of every ethnic group in Singapore who talked about how he had made a home for them. Inclusion. He also was so rigorous in the pursuit of corruption, from cabinet ministers to minor functionaries overcharging people for fines, that he allowed people who were part of his own political movement to go to prison, but he got rid of corruption and Singapore soon gained a reputation as the place to invest, the place where people wanted to be, where everything was on the up-and-up, things were on the level.

It made a huge difference. The third thing he wanted to do was to have an alliance with the United States for security purposes, but to get along with everybody in the neighborhood,

which he proceeded to do. And finally, he launched a constant organized effort to modernize the country, educationally, economically, technologically, and to maintain social cohesion, with methods that most of us the United States often thought was pretty severe, including caning mal-doers, but it worked. I remember once there was a lot of joking in the press about the fact that Singapore banned chewing gum. They got mad because kids were leaving chewing gum under desks and under seats on public transportation and things like that, but they got rid of the problem. And they built by common consensus one of the five best education systems in the world. A few years ago, a small country with only six-plus million people allocated three billion dollars to biotechnology research, same amount of your money I spent to sequence a human genome. So did it succeed? Well, when he took office, the per capita income was under $1,000. When we celebrated his life at his memorial service, Singapore's per capita income was $55,000, one of the most remarkable economic success stories ever. Ernesto Zedillo became sort of an accidental president of Mexico. The person his party favored for the presidency was killed early in the campaign season and he was picked to succeed him, but he was a very well trained economist and he wanted to build a modern economy for Mexico and a modern political nation. That was his vision. So he set about building a modern economy by opening Mexico to competition and investment, and promoting responsible, more honest behavior.

Early in this effort, through no fault of his own, they had a horrible economic crisis. They were about to go broke and the United States stepped in. I was president, it was 20 years ago. We stepped in and gave him a loan, which on the day I gave it was opposed by something like 80% of the American people who thought about Mexico's yesterdays instead of its tomorrows. Zedillo repaid that loan to the United States three years early with more than 500 million dollars in interest. It was one of the best investments we ever made. We still have disagreements with Mexico, but think about your own life. It's one thing to have a disagreement with a friend and another to have a disagreement with an adversary, and the consequences are dramatically different. Maybe more important, he recognized that his country could never become fully modern unless it was more politically competitive, and his party, the PRI, had enjoyed a monopoly on power for 70 years. He opened the field of competition, had an honest election. It was won by Vincente Fox, and he handed over power peacefully for the first time in seven decades to a member of the opposite party. Did it work? Well, Mexico's not free of problems, but it's worth noting that one of his successors built 140 tuition-free universities and last year they graduated more than 100,000 engineers, and that the economic growth was sufficient to keep Mexicans home between 2010 and 2014. For the first time in my lifetime, there was no net in migration from Mexico. Nelson Mandela's vision was to build a modern democratic state that would survive and thrive after the end of apartheid and the end of his term. His strategy included his now-famous reconciliation commission, where people who had committed crimes, even murderous crimes during the apartheid era, could come and testify, make their actions a part of the public record, and then be reconciled to the rest of the country so they could participate in the future.

It was an astonishing thing. He said, "Well, you know, we don't have time "to build any more jails and worry about this. We got to go forward." Something that was copied largely in a

slightly different form though local community courts by Rwanda after the Rwandan genocide and a capacity that is beyond the culture of many other countries. Interestingly enough, we are now seeing the ongoing efforts of the president of Colombia, President Santos, to resolve the last remaining conflicts there with the FARC and the big hang-up is who's going to be held responsible for what. And this is something we all have to deal with in our lives and we have to deal with in other cultures, but accountability is important, but so is going beyond. And different people, different cultures, draw the balance in different ways. There's no doubt in my mind that Mandela did the right thing for South Africa. The second thing he did which was arguably just as important was practice the politics of radical inclusion. That to most of us was symbolized when he invited his jailers to his inauguration, but far more important was that he put the leaders of the parties that supported apartheid in his cabinet. You'd think, "Well, that happens all the time. National unity government." Mandela ran for president with 18 opponents and got 63% of the vote, and the first time black South Africans had voted in 300 years. And his whole term occurred when I was president. So we did a lot of business together and I always let him call me late at night because of the time difference. He'd like to go to bed early and he knew I'd stay up late, and so he'd call me late at night. So he called me one night and he said, "Oh, they were giving me hell." And I said, "Who, the Boers?" I was always kidding him about the Afrikaners, their whole history and everything. He said, "Oh, no no, my own people." I said, "Well, what are they saying?" "They're saying, how can you put these people "in the government? "You won 63% of the vote! "They kept you in prison and while you were in prison, "they were beating us up, shooting us, "killing a bunch of us.

Now, you're going to give them government ministries?" And I said, "What did you tell them?" He said, "I said, well, you know we just voted "for the first time in 300 years. "So let me ask you, can we run the financial system "all by ourselves? "Can we run the military all by ourselves? "Can we run the police all by ourselves? "Is there one thing in this whole country "we can run all by ourselves? "The answer is no. "Maybe someday. This is not that day." He said, "If I can get over it, so can you. We're going to do this together." You'd be surprised if somebody gave a speech like that in Washington, wouldn't you? It's important to recognize, and not to be too sanctimonious here. Mandela had paid a remarkable price and learned astonishing lessons, and he had the stature to do that and not fall. There was a third now often overlooked part of his strategy, which was wise that hasn't worked out yet. He named as his deputy president a much younger man, Thabo Mbeki, who was the most gifted economist in South Africa because he knew it would take his entire term and he was determined only to serve one term. He was already well into his 70s and he paid a pretty stiff physical price for the first years of his imprisonment. So the other part of the strategy was to be succeeded by Mbeki so he could build a modern economic state and increase trade and investment across Africa in a way that would stabilize South Africa. That part of the plan didn't work, for reasons beyond his control. South Africa first became the epicenter of the world AIDS crisis and was made worse by the troubles in Zimbabwe and other places, which led to even more people coming into South Africa who were HIV positive. Meanwhile, and still to me somewhat mystifying, Mbeki denied for a long time the nature, the dimensions, the cause, and the remedies of the crisis.

I knew this because our foundation helped them to come up with an AIDS plan and they were doing fine in the cities. They had prosperous cities and great health systems, but they really had to get out into the countryside. And when we celebrated Mandela, I can't remember, maybe his 80th birthday, his 80th or his 85th birthday. I was down there and we had 50 people who worked with our Health Access Initiative dressed up and ready to go to South Africa to implement a plan that the government, the cabinet, had adopted and it all was canceled, and it was a bizarre story of local politics gone awry. The third most important person in South Africa's political hierarchy, after the president and the deputy president, is the treasurer of the African National Congress, because he funds all their political operations and it was effectively a one-party dominant state. His wife was the health minister. She had been trained as a physician in the old Soviet Union and she thought AIDS was sort of a Western plot to make pharmaceutical companies more money and said all this could be cured by eating native roots and yams. Sounds crazy now, but they believed that, and Mbeki felt, perhaps accurately, that he couldn't let her go and hold on to power so even though he had a wonderful woman working for him in his office who wanted to do something about it, they didn't. But the point is, that's another thing to remember in whatever you do. Mbeki took office intending to build a modern economic state. He was gifted enough to do it. He knew enough to do it. But he didn't deal well with the incoming fire. When something happens you didn't intend to happen, AIDS explodes, you can't play like it didn't happen. I always say, you know when President Bush and Al Gore ran for president in 2000, nobody asked either one of them, "What are you going to do when the Twin Towers are blown up, "the Pentagon's attacked, and another plane aimed for the Capitol crashes in Pennsylvania?" He could have said, "I'm sorry, that's not what I ran to do.

I ran to reverse Bill Clinton's economic policy, I'm sorry." "I can't do that." You're laughing, but you see, don't you? I mean, that's basically what happened in South Africa. And that's important to remember not just in politics but in anything. There's always going to be something happening you weren't planning for and you have to learn to deal with that and pursue your original vision at the same time. But Mandela still deserves history's applause because South Africa is still a democracy, it's still operating, it's still doing a lot of good. President Zuma, who has his own problems, has been great dealing with AIDS, really great. And Mandela proved that inclusion is better than constant conflict, so I think all that works. Now let's talk about some non-state actors. Wangari Maathai, who died a couple years ago, won the Nobel Prize in 2004 for creating the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. She was a good friend of Hillary's and mine, and she was an amazing woman. But she knew that the Kenyan tree cover had gone all the way down to 1% of the land, that it was eroding the topsoil, destroying agricultural productivity. That it was going to cause endless political conflicts in the country, fuel the corruption. And she had a vision of repairing that damage so that Kenya could take its considerable other strengths and grow in a way that pursues broad-based prosperity. But what she won the Nobel Prize for was figuring out, "I need to figure out something everybody can do "to advance this vision. "I don't need to just be in the Parliament, "advocate these changes. I need to do something that will involve everyone." And so she got thousands and thousands and thousands of people to plant trees, tens of millions of trees. Single-handedly, from the grassroots up, she began to try to

reverse a debilitating trend that we're still working on today. So her vision as a citizen organizing an NGO, she didn't have the power to do it all herself, but now the government has supported policies finally that are allowing us to map the country, to plan in a strategic way to do things, and they asked my foundation to go there because of, I think, our long friendship with her and what we'd done.

But that's a way to look at her life and say she made a real difference and she did it by empowering individual people to do something that sounds simple and doing it on a scale that would catch the attention of the world. I'll give you another example. A Republican American businessman, now sadly, he passed away a few years ago. In the early 1960s, Ken Iverson founded a company called Nucor. It was a steel company. His vision was to make steel, not in original casting, the way it was largely done in and around Pittsburgh, but by melting down existing steel and then reforming it. And the technology was developed so the steel could then be rolled in one-inch thick rolls instead of four-inch thick rolls, making it much more malleable, much more suitable for converging into a variety of purposes. That's not the important thing. Iverson decided that if he wanted his company to last for the long run and to be able to adapt, that 40% of their success would be rooted in their technology and 60% in their people. So he adopted the most radical egalitarian culture of any company of which I'm aware in America, and like I said, the reason I know this is I recruited the company to Arkansas and I liked him and I'm pretty sure he never voted for me 'cause he was a really conservative Republican. He didn't want the government to tell him to do this, but this was the communitarian's dream, what he did. First of all, when he had 11 steel mills in America, they had no corporate headquarters. They rented office space in an office park in Charlotte, North Carolina. They had a grand total of 22 people in the central office, with 11 steel mills. The workers were paid a salary that averaged 65 to 75% of the industry average, but they got a weekly bonus based on production totals and the non-production workers got a bonus based on another formula.

In addition to that, there was a profit-sharing plan of 10% of the profits, unavailable to top management. Everybody else participated. In addition to that, if you had a child who wanted to go to college and you were a Nucor employee, they would pay the equivalent of a year's tuition in community college for the child to go. One man in Darlington, South Carolina educated eight children working for Nucor and it had no adverse effect on your pay or your bonus. In addition to that, they had a no layoff policy. So, I've still got the letter Ken Iverson wrote to all his employees in the only year in the 1980s when Nucor made less money than they did the year before. They never lost money till the financial crash, but their profit margin went down, so he sent a letter which said something like this: "As you know, the world steel businesses in a terrible slump "and so our sales went down 20% this year. "This is not your fault. "You did everything I asked you to do. "It is, however, my fault. "I should have been smart enough to figure out "how we could be the only company in the world "not to have our profits decline. "As you know, I have a no layoff policy, "so everybody's income is going down 20% this year, "but since it's my fault, not yours, I'm going to cut my income 60%." It was a big article in Fortune or Forbes. It was kind of mixed tone, pointing out how he was now by a light year the lowest-paid Fortune 500 company executive in America. He wore it like a badge of honor. When I was president, he wrote a

little management book called Plain Talk. It's still my favorite one. He said, "I can go down the street in New York "where all these corporate offices are "and I can watch people go to work "and look in in five minutes at their desk and tell you whether that company is succeeding or not." And he said, long before it became the problem it is today, "I don't want short-term investors in Nucor.

"They want somebody committed to turning a quick profit, "they should invest somewhere else. We're in it for the long run." And it's very interesting to see, he had a very inclusive process. There were only three management layers below him and the employee making the steel and every employee had president's phone number and his, and you could call him on the phone, but only if you had talked to your supervisor first. The point is he created a culture of radical inclusion and it worked and it's working today. They have the same culture today, except now, the education benefit is higher and if you've got a spouse who wants to go to college, your spouse is eligible, and if you want to go after work, you can go. And none of it takes a penny away from either your wages or your bonus. So I would say that guy was a success. By the time I became president, Nucor was the third biggest steel company in America and he did it with a vision, with a plan, with execution, and radical inclusion. And, I'll give you another example, Bill and Melinda Gates. They have a simple vision. Their vision is that every life has equal value and therefore we should create a world where people have equal chances. That's their vision, it's simple. They have a strategy. "We got a lot of money "and we're going to invest it to achieve that vision, "but we're going to invest it "through people who do things that we can't do. "We don't want to hire 100,000 people to implement all these things we fund." So, for example, Melinda Gates and Hillary recently announced before she left the foundation that all this data research they'd done on the condition of women and the disparities in the conditions of women and men in the United States and around the world. Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation invest a lot of money every year through our Health Access Initiative to solve problems and I love the way he's totally iconoclastic.

He just wants to do what works. He said to me a few years ago, he said, "You know, the world shouldn't need what you do. "The World Health Organization ought to be able to do this, but it can't and so we do it." But it's very interesting to watch, if you listen to him, he'll say, "We find it harder to give this money away "than it was to make it "because our goal is simple and clear. We want to create a world of equal chances." And they, I think, have been most successful in their health investments around the world. Where the Millennium Development Goals had been exceeded for declining infant mortality, declining maternal mortality, and any number of other measurements there. I'll give you one other example, or two in healthcare, because they're important. I recently went to Haiti where I've been working for many years to visit a project I supported on the grounds of the oldest AIDS clinic in the world. The first AIDS clinic in the world was established in Port-au-Prince, Haiti by a doctor named Bill Pape, who is a native of Port-au-Prince. Port-au-Prince was a city built in a bowl for about 200,000 people and now three million live there, so a lot of people live essentially out on the field. 100,000 people just live in what should be out in the water. This makes the possibility of waterborne diseases much more likely and that's what cholera turned out to be actually when it basically entered the water stream in Haiti because the

country doesn't have good sewer and water systems. So Bill Pape took the money that he got from a variety of sources and built a modern cholera treatment center. Most important thing is this. This guy spent his whole life treating AIDS and then when the earthquake occurred, all the land he had around his little hospital, he gave over to a tent city, but he realized that cholera could be just as debilitating to his country, so he designed a hospital to maximize the success of treatment. Maximum light, sanitation, no infections, and he treated the water and the sanitation above the ground because of the characteristics I just described.

He developed this absolutely beautiful treatment system covered in plants and greenery which got 99% of the bacteria out of the waste system and then they covered it with chlorine and got up to 99% before it could ever be released into the ground. This one man in one place doing something at an affordable price that could be scaled and could save countless lives around the world. Paul Farmer, my friend, he's on the board of our health programs, founded Partners in Health with Jim Kim, who's now the head of the World Bank and he figured out how to serve an area of 200,000 with a health staff that would normally only serve 20,000, by building one good hospital and then satellite clinics and then beyond the satellite, trained community medical workers. And then he went to Rwanda at our request and worked with our foundation and built a hospital in every region of the country. They'd all been destroyed except the one in the capital city during the genocide. The last hospital in Butaro near the Ugandan border is the only serious cancer treatment center in that part of Africa, but they're all the same thing. The simple system that can be affordable and repeated by countries at income levels way below ours. If you have a vision, a strategy, and you have the support of people at the grassroots level because you're inclusive, these kinds of things can be done by ordinary citizens. These are things we need to be thinking about in America as we work to restore broad-based prosperity, as we work to define our role in a world of competition from new and different forces to define the future. Arguably the most interesting non-governmental organization today which proves the importance of inclusion by its shortcomings but is formidable is ISIS. ISIS is a terrorist organization, an NGO, trying to become a state. That is, they don't recognize any of the boundaries of the Middle Eastern countries as legitimate.

They were all established, drawn largely by Westerners after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, end of World War One. And so when they go capture a place, they set up their own judicial system, they set up their own rule makings, they set up whatever their social services are going to be and the only thing is you can't disagree with them or they'll kill you, as we have seen. And sometimes they kill you, they will allow just as the Ottomans did in the Caliphate, they'll allow a Christian or a Jew to live if they agree to play a fine or tax every year to live within their hallowed kingdom. But if they decide you're an apostate, they just kill you, which is why they authorize the killing of other Muslims, and while they went after that tiny sect of Yazidis who were totally powerless, because they viewed them as inherently apostate. The only book I'm going to recommend today, a fascinating book written on the minority religions of the Middle East by a retired British civil servant fluent in both Arabic and Farsi called Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms. It's about all the minority religions in the Middle East at one time. There are still 200,000 Samaritans there, so we surely there's

a Good Samaritan, we can repeat the parable. It's fascinating, but the point is ISIS is the opposite. They have a vision, they have a strategy. They think they're right. But they are anti-inclusion in the extreme and people are voting with their feet as you see. It will not be the future but it cannot be ignored. It has to be countered. So as America charts its course in the world and tries to restore broad-based prosperity and opportunity at home, tries to get back more in the future business, to accelerate all these great technological and biological developments that are going on, it is well to remember that. We need to make our purposes clear with a vision that is inclusive of our own people and also gives other people a chance to be part of constructive rather than destructive partnerships.

For me personally, I've always had a pretty simple purpose. I always wanted at the end of my life to be able to answer with a resounding yes three questions: are people better off when you quit than when you started, do children have a brighter future, are things coming together instead of being torn apart? To me, all the rest is background music. And I tried to develop the political skills and the ability to constantly develop policy that would enable me personally to say that, which meant at given times I might have a different vision for what the country had to do at this point in time or my native state had to do at that point in time. All of you have to do that. When I was a student here, and I quoted this in 1992 when I came here and gave my lectures before I started my campaign, I was deeply moved by Carroll Quigley's statement in the History of Civilizations that the defining characteristic of our civilization was a simple belief that the future could be better than the past and that every person had a personal moral responsibility to contribute to making it better. That no one had the truth, so the great joy in life was the constant search for the truth, and it was the journey that gave life dignity and meaning. So I can't tell you what your purpose should be, but I can tell you you'll have a lot more fun in your life if you have one and if it's bigger than you. A couple of years ago, right as the annual meeting of our Global Initiative was beginning, I was notified that a young woman who worked for our Health Access Initiative in Mozambique and her fiance, a gifted architect, had been among those murdered by Al-Shabaab in the attack on the mall in Nairobi. She was a Dutch nurse. Ironically, in all these years I've been doing all this work around the world, we've only lost two people to violence, and they were both Dutch nurses. But this woman was a Dutch nurse who was so good at what she did, she took time off from working for us, went back to Harvard and got a PhD in public health and came back to take a management position in our efforts in Africa.

Her name was Elif Yavuz. She was eight-and-a-half months pregnant. She went to Nairobi because it's the best place in that part of Africa to have a baby and she and her husband were just strolling down the mall and they were killed. The people that killed her doubtless think they are righteous people, but if you believe in an inclusive future in an interdependent world, it doesn't belong to them. Nigeria has a new president because a majority of people in Nigeria don't like Boko Haram. They believe in an inclusive future. They don't think you have a right to kill everybody who disagrees with you. So anyway, when I was at the Global Initiative, I was very moved by this because I had been with that woman six weeks before she was murdered, visiting our projects and she was beautiful and very pregnant, and we joked. I said, "You know, I'm Lamaze father. "If you've got an emergency here, just call me in to play." And we were joking and having fun and six weeks later, she

was gone. None of us know how long we're going to be here or what we're going to do, but her life had purpose because she had a vision and she developed a personal strategy to make a difference, which she did. So I told this story that I just told you and when I told the story, another woman came up to me and she said, "You know, more than 20 years ago, "I was that young nurse. "I was in Kenya, I was working in Africa in an NGO, and I was pregnant and I went to Nairobi to have my baby." She said, "My baby was born healthy and I was blessed, "but a few years ago he was shot several times in the Virginia Tech shooting," and she said, "Thank God he lived "and it changed his whole life "and all he wants to do now "is work in a non-governmental group to give children a safer future." We all find our purpose in our own way, but if you work at it, it'll come. I wish you well.

Thank you very much. - Good to see ya. Nice to see ya. Mr. President, the students have submitted some really excellent questions, I think, very stimulating, but the first one is a softball, and I can't let you talk too long on it 'cause it's going to be great fun, I think. There's some other good ones coming along. It's the teacher in me. "What did going to Georgetown mean to you? How did it influence your purpose?" - Well, I'll try to give you the short answer because I think I told this before, but when I wrote my autobiography, my editor made me take out 20 pages that I wrote about Georgetown and there's still a lot in there about it. He said, "You can't possibly remember all these people and all these teachers and everything." And I said, "But I do." It had a profound impact on me, first of all because I met people from all over the world, both my teachers and my fellow students, that I would have never met otherwise, you know, and our class was the only graduating class I think in American history that produced three presidents of three countries. When I became president, my classmate Alfredo Cristiani was the president of El Salvador. When I left office, my classmate Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was the president of Philippines, and the whole time I was there, our classmate Turki al-Faisal was the head of the Saudi version of the CIA, later Ambassador to the United States and Ambassador to the United Kingdom. So I was here with fascinating people, I was here at a fascinating time, but it affected me mostly because of the teachers I had and people I went to school with and the conversations we had about what was going on in our classes and the debates we had. It was very different than now. In my class, we did not have in the School of Foreign Service an elective course until the second semester of our junior year. The big controversy. But I loved it and I doubt very seriously if I ever would have become president had I not come to Georgetown and I am certain I would not have done whatever good I did do, I would have done less well if I hadn't been here.

- Thank you. This is from DureaLaBizova, a sophomore in the college. Sort of two-pronged. "Where do you see this generation of young adults going? In what way is our path going to be different than before?" - What has happened in technology to this date will look like child's play over the next 20 to 30 years. I think most of you will live to be 90 years old or more unless some accident befalls you, or you have an environmentally-caused cancer we don't know how to treat yet. I think that you will live in a time where the technological revolution will extend into artificial intelligence and we'll be able to do things we never imagined being able to do before. I think the combination of nanotechnology improvements and the continuing plumbing of the mysteries of the genome will lead us to have affordable,

four-times-a-year health exams that will basically involve going into a canister and being scanned. And I think one of the biggest debates in medicine within 20 years will be, for example, since we all have cancerous cells rooting around in our body all the time and most of them are just destroyed by the operations of our body, one of the great questions will be, "Now that we can see this submicroscopictumor, should we zap it out now or wait till later?" I mean, your life will be dramatically different. I believe that you will be given one final chance to figure out how to avoid the most calamitous consequences of climate change and I think there will be even more economically-beneficial ways to do it than there are now. I think you'll have to worry a lot about water. I think California is a canary in the coal mine. I think that'll be a big issue. I think you have to worry about how to feed a planet of nine billion people if we actually go that far. If we modernize enough in the developing world, we may stop at eight billion, because the one thing that across all religions and cultures that slows the birth rate is the education of women and the economic development of the poor.

So I think you live in an exciting time. I think that it is unlikely that these ideologically-driven conflicts we're having now with non-state actors will be fully resolved. I hope and pray that we will leave behind a system where we can say with some confidence that we can keep really big bad things from happening. That's why this negotiation with Iran is so important, maybe for reasons that haven't been much in the press. For example, if they get a bomb, then there's four or five Arab countries that can afford one. You got six more people with nuclear capacity. They're expensive to build and maintain and very expensive to secure and if you're going to have a bomb that you can use, you got to have excess fissile material and that's what you'll have to watch when you grow up. What about the accidents? Because any country that uses a big bomb knows that it can be annihilated, but that fissile material, I consider it a minor miracle of the modern world that the fissile stocks of Pakistan as far as we know, even though Mr. Khan gave all the nuclear technology to North Korea and others, as far as we know, their materials have not been stolen, sold, or given away. So I think you'll have to worry about all that. But I believe that you will live longer, have more options, and we will probably not have fully resolved the problem between growing productivity and adequate employment. But I do think we'll do a better job by the time you're raising your own kids and living your own lives. I think we will do a better job in figuring out how to more fairly apportion the wealth that we are creating. I think there will be more shared prosperity, but what nobody can really tell you is whether we've entered a period where the technological changes are so rapid that we won't be able to create enough employment in a conventional sense for 40 hours a week to keep the populace employed and so if that happens, we'll have to think about some radical changes in the arrangement of labor and capital.

Carlos Slim said the other day, he's pretty smart, that he thought at some time in this new century we would maybe be down to a three-day workweek just because of the breath-taking increases in productivity. If so, have at it. Have a lot of fun with your leisure time, and don't forget to serve. - This may be the easiest question or the toughest. "What was your most difficult decision as president or otherwise?" We can pass on that if you want. - The ones that I had to make? - Yep. - Well, interestingly enough, they weren't the ones that

were most politically unpopular. Like I said, 80% of the people are against what I did in Mexico. Easy decision. 74% of the people were against my first act in the international arena as president, which was to put together a big aid package for Russia, because they were then so poor in '93, they couldn't even afford to bring their soldiers home from the Baltic States. A majority was against what I did in Bosnia when we started. The most difficult decisions were my version of Mbeki and the AIDS crisis. First I ran for president because I thought trickle-down economics was wrong. We had a robust economic climate for most of the 1980s and ordinary people weren't benefiting from it at all. Poverty had gone up, wages were stagnant, and I wanted to give the middle class a tax cut and right before I was elected, the government said, "Oh by the way, "the deficit's going to be twice as big "as we told you it was. Oh, by the way." So I had a two choices. I could play like it didn't happen and just go ahead and present my original plan, or go back to the core strategy, which was to get America growing again, we had to bring interest rates down. Because, keep in mind, we had a normal economy. That is interest rates were getting high and it was going to drive and they were higher than inflation. So my gamble was, if I could get interest rates down, there'd be this huge amount of private investment which would overcome the contractionary impact of the economic plan I presented, which called for both spending cuts and tax increases.

But I hated to give up something that I really wanted to provide and I had to choose that or doubling the Earned Income Tax Credit, which benefited primarily lower-income workers who had children, and I just don't think that a society as rich as ours should allow anybody to have kids in the house and work full-time and still be in poverty. I just think that's wrong. So I did it, so all I heard for two years was, "Oh, he broke his promise on the middle-class tax cut." The interest rate declines were worth $2,200 to the average family in lower mortgage rates, college loan rates, home mortgage rates, and credit card rates. And when we passed a Balanced Budget bill, we also passed the middle-class tax cut, but that was a hard decision. It was hard for me not to act alone in Bosnia. We all knew what Serbia was doing in Bosnia and I sent my then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher around to Europe and asked them to help, and they didn't want to do it and the thousand reasons why. And I decided I shouldn't do that, because it wouldn't be sustainable. The Europeans had to buy-in. They had to own the fact that if they wanted a Europe that was united and democratic and free for the first time in history, the Balkans were going to be part of it. And so I waited until we could get a unified response, but it was a painful wait. A lot of people died on that wait. And some of the decisions that I regret most were not hard, but were wrong. Like, we didn't even talk seriously about whether we should send troops to Rwanda because the public was exhausted with what happened at Black Hawk Down and in Somalia, and because we were involved in Bosnia and that was much more in the news, and frankly we didn't have any idea they could kill 10% of the country in 90 days with machetes, essentially.

So, sometimes the things you regret most were not hard at the time, but it should have been a little harder. I'll always regret we didn't have a long drawn-out debate on it. We didn't even really discuss it and I've spent my life trying to make up to the Rwandans and I'm about to get there, I think. I'm working at it. - This is a question I wanted ask. Early on, you committed yourself to public service and you outlined your fundamental purpose. A

vocational commitment like that, did you ever go through a time when you really questioned it and say, "What what am I doing here?" and attempted to withdraw? - You mean, just to give it up? - Public service, yeah. - Well, I did a couple of times when I was governor. I was governor a long time. 'Least I proved I could hold down a job. But, you know, I served a very long time and the people of my native state were good enough to elect me five times. Based on recent events, I don't know if I could win again down there. So there were times when I just got burned out, you know, but I'd always find something new to do. And I told people, one of the reasons I love being in public life, it was like peeling an onion that had no end. There was always another layer, it was always something new. Always something interesting. There was always something to engage the imagination and to stretch your capacities. So I didn't, and when Congress and the press and all were all hot on that Whitewater business and I realized, I knew, wasn't on the level, there was nothing to it, and that there couldn't have been. I invested in land deal and lost money. The guy later went into the S&L business and it failed. It was the smallest S&L business failure in the country and I didn't ever borrow any money from him, it was a made-up deal. It was heartbreaking to me to see otherwise sensible people treat it like it was something, but it never made me want to quit. I had an unusual upbringing, but I was raised not to quit. We're not big on quitting in my family.

You may have noticed that. So, it was awful, but I learned to kinda just wall it off. And, I think, I also felt, maybe this was arrogant and I shouldn't have felt that way but I spent a long time when I was president reading the history of other presidencies, including not well-known presidents, and I realized that the success of a given president is first determined by the times in which you live. I mean, Washington was either going to be a great president or a flop depending on whether he tried to be a king or he gave us a democracy. He made the right decision. Therefore, even though government had nowhere near the range of things to do that it does now, he was a very great president and he made really good decisions on the big things. Lincoln became president when the whole question was whether the Union would survive or not. A lot of people thought it wouldn't. A lot of people thought the South had more talented generals and the Union wouldn't hang around long enough to do it, and Roosevelt had the Depression and World War Two. But it also depends on whether the skills and the psychology of a person in a given leadership position, this is not just politics, actually fit well with the challenges of that particular moment. And when I read all these histories of the lesser-known presidents, I realized some of them were really well suited to govern when they did and others might have been quite successful had they governed at another time, but not then. Like, I'll just give you an example. A lot of people think Franklin Pierce is one of the worst presidents we ever had, and if you measure that because he was elected right before the Civil War and he couldn't stop the country's drift toward war and he couldn't figure out a stop to the spread of slavery and he couldn't do this and he couldn't do that, that's absolutely true. But he was an immensely successful soldier in the Mexican War. He was a successful member of Congress and went home and became governor of New Hampshire.

Only other governor of a small state to be elected president. And he was on his way to be inaugurated with his only child. Presidents were then inaugurated in March, and he took a

train from New Hampshire down to Washington. On the way there was a train wreck. Nobody was hurt very bad. There were a couple of broken bones, except his 11-year-old son who fell on his neck, snapped it, and died. Nobody else got more than a little broken bone and that's how he began his presidency, with his wife in a virtually catatonic state of grief. So I always wondered whether he had different circumstances he might have been quite a successful president, ruled in a calmer time, and I'm not sure that it was in the cards for anybody to succeed before the country split apart. So anyway that's what I think about, but by and large, I think when you get tired and want to bag it, unless you're old and you think, "I've got three years left and I'd like spend it doing something else," you ought to hang in there and work through it. Or if you believe you made the right decision in the first place and you ought to go, somebody will push you out one way or the other. But you ought not to open the door if your vision has not been fulfilled. I'm not big on quitting. I'd rather hang around and fight it through, and if you need to go, somebody will kick you out.

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