

---

**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 14, 2011 8:15 PM  
**To:** H; Mills, Cheryl D  
**Subject:** Op-ed latest

For your review:

Today, as we grapple with challenges at home and abroad, many Americans are wondering what lies ahead for their families and for our country. Ten years after 9/11, in a difficult economy and a rapidly changing world, some are asking whether the United States is still a global leader, and if that is even a worthwhile goal when so many at home are struggling.

With the international community gathering in New York this week for the United Nations General Assembly, and the world once again looking to America for leadership, these questions take on new urgency. We need only look to the lessons of our past and the needs of our future to answer them.

America has the talent and ingenuity to come through our current difficulties and emerge stronger than ever. But that outcome is not inevitable. It depends on our ability to step up and make smart, necessary and often hard choices.

We've lived through times of anxiety before. When I was growing up, the fear was that we were falling behind the Soviets in technology and ambition. When I started practicing law, our country faced stagflation and oil shocks. When I became First Lady, it was Japan's rise and the apparent decline of American competitiveness.

But each time, we rose to the challenge. American entrepreneurs and innovators proved the naysayers wrong. Our people and leaders built a resilient economy at home and a global architecture of institutions and norms that protected not just our own interests but the good of all humanity. That was exceptional leadership from an exceptional country.

In the last decade, we've lived through terrorist attacks, two long wars and a global financial crisis, but America is still an exceptional country -- exceptional for the creativity and openness that draw people here from around the world; for our unwavering commitment to securing a more just and peaceful world; and for our willingness, especially when it matters most, to put the common good first, ahead of ideology, party or personal interest.

I hear this from leaders and activists in nearly every country I visit. American leadership is still respected -- and required -- around the world. When old adversaries need an honest broker or fundamental freedoms need a champion, the international community looks to America. When a famine threatens the lives of millions in East Africa or floods sweep across Pakistan, people look to America.

They see what we sometimes miss amid all the noise in Washington: America is and remains a beacon of freedom, a guarantor of global security, and a true opportunity society -- a place to excel, a country of possibility where ideas hatched in a college dorm room can grow into a multibillion dollar business.

The sources of America's greatness are more durable than many realize. Our military is by far the strongest and our economy is by far the largest in the world. Our workers are the most productive and our universities are the gold standard. Our commitment to core values of equality, tolerance and opportunity remain rock-solid.

We have real challenges, but there is no doubt that America has the capacity to grow our economy, solve our problems and continue our global leadership.

Now there are some who argue that the United States can no longer afford to engage with the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we can't afford not to. For example, the new free trade agreement with South Korea promises to support 70,000 American jobs, if Congress will approve it. From opening new markets for American businesses to breaking up terrorist plots and bringing the wars of the last decade to a successful close, our work abroad holds the key to our prosperity and security at home.

Leading the world in the years ahead will take the same hard work, clear-eyed choices, and commitment to shared service and sacrifice that built our country's greatness in the first place – even if we must often lead in new ways.

I think about my father, who served for five years in the Navy during World War II. When he returned home to his family and his small business, the last thing he wanted to hear was that the government wanted to use more of his tax dollars to rebuild our former adversaries. But that's exactly what President Truman and Secretary of State George Marshall convinced the country to do. They weren't alone. A Republican-led Congress got on board, recognizing that our post-war future was tied up with the future of Europe and Japan. And America's business community did too, fanning out across the country to make the case for investing billions of dollars in foreign development programs.

The world is watching to see if we can summon this spirit again, and there will be real consequences if we fail: our allies will lose confidence, our adversaries will be emboldened and other powers will start to fill the vacuum.

What does this mean in practical terms?

First, in Washington, leaders have to get serious about taking the necessary steps President Obama has outlined to get our economy growing, create jobs, and bring down our debt. And as we debate the choices ahead, we must resist the temptation to turn inward and undercut our global leadership by slashing diplomacy and development – which only account for 1 percent of the federal budget but yield critical benefits.

Second, just as after World War II, the business community has to lead as well. American companies are sitting on large cash reserves and they have the best workforce and intellectual property in the world. It's time to invest, hire and build here in America. And it's time to pursue new markets and new opportunities around the world that will create jobs back home and greater prosperity for all.

Ultimately, the fate of America's global leadership rests on the shoulders of the American people themselves. As we approach the tenth anniversary of 9/11, are we ready to recapture that spirit of service and solidarity and find the common ground that unites us as Americans? Are we willing to recommit to the project of building America together? Are we prepared to believe again that there are no limits to what can be achieved if Americans roll up their sleeves and work together? President Obama and I believe that we are.

Late last year I held a town hall meeting in Kosovo and a man stood up and thanked me for everything America has done for his homeland under three administrations. Like in so many other places around the world, he and his neighbors saw American leadership as a lynchpin to their own future success. "Will you help us so we could finally see the biggest and the brightest and the most beautiful parts of democracy and a new economy?" he asked. "Can the great American nation assist us in our struggle to restore our hope?"

That's what America means in the world: Hope. Freedom. Opportunity. Today it is our responsibility to live up to that promise, to make the hard choices necessary to keep the promise of America alive here and around the world.