

In my nearly thirty years as a diplomat, I've been fortunate enough to represent the United States of America. In doing so, I don't just carry messages from Washington to other countries, or report on the doings of foreign governments, or dress in the local caftan, lurk in the bazaar, and spread wicked rumors so as to confound our nation's enemies. It's true, of course, that I represent American interests. Tough and hard-nosed interests at times; and if you don't take the "service" part of Foreign Service seriously, this is not a career for you. But one of the great things about serving America overseas is that you get to serve a country that bases its identity not on tribal membership or cultural traditions or a specific language but on a set of values. Imagine a career where you actually get paid to be idealistic.

And if you're idealistic enough, you can succeed. That is, if by success you mean two tours in Iraq becoming acquainted with the sounds of incoming 107mm rockets, getting your embassy burned from under you in Serbia, and working long hours in the dust and monsoon of Pakistan, a country President Obama has told me "keeps him awake at night." But it still pays better than being an adjunct professor.

Let me not mock idealism, because I embrace it. Idealism is not just the quality of believing in

Now, that was a healthy question in the broad, cosmic sense. But at least my comrades, these loyal red-staters, seemed to know who George McGovern was. What, you say? Who's George

defining the success of Pakistani democracy as a success for America. More rice please, and how about passing the dal?

Let's not forget, too, that we're locked in a struggle, a struggle against those who would destroy democratic institutions, stamp out tolerance, and strangle diversity. I like to think that I'm a man of peace. But I want to make the distinction clear. I'm not a pacifist. There are times when you must fight for what you believe. The fight that I've joined is a terrible thing, but it's necessary. And in this fight, Pakistan is not the enemy. Those in Pakistan who believe in democracy and tolerance are our natural allies, and I always prefer to fight alongside my friends; America, Pakistan, and our other friends against a common enemy. My task as a diplomat is not to shy away from a fight. It's to make sure that we win the fight, together with those who share our valp 0048(h)-3(o)-38au48>0059e2a(s;2 TD1100039e2a(s;25c2 TD1100039e2a7048

in the toughest of times in foreign policy (and believe me, in Pakistan these days it is truly the toughest of times), to retain the optimism which itself is such an important ingredient in the success of diplomacy. That, I believe, leads to solidarity by example: by decent and ethical behavior, we show every day that we stand ready to follow the lead of decent and ethical Pakistanis who want the same for their country. Thanks for the wonderful meal, my friends, and let's get together and talk again soon.

From this illustration, then, let me return to you, the graduating class of 2012 at Pomona. I urge you to consider, whichever path you choose as you make your way down Indian Hill Boulevard into the mean streets of post-college life after that last French Roast at 42nd Street Bagel, the importance of humility. As a diplomat, I've learned the skill of listening, or at least trying to listen; putting myself in the shoes of someone who thinks differently; and yet not losing my own convictions and beliefs. I've been fortunate enough to be able to apply my learning, as you surely must, to principles such as solidarity, which has helped me grasp just how deep the distance can be between people in terrible and challenging situations, and how those situations cannot be overcome unless solidarity is expressed. And most of all, I've learned that you can go through a lot of experiences you may not have expected, and find that your ideals not only remain intact but also even grow, as they have in my case. I believe more now in our values than I did thirty years ago, and it's probably the greatest gift I've gotten from my career.

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degree in modern European history from the Johns Hopkins University, and was born and raised here in Claremont, California. His mother, Helen-Jeanne, is Pomona Class of 1947.