"Soft Power, Global Ethics, and the Earth Charter"
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"Where on Earth are We Going?"
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It is a privilege to be part of this symposium honoring Maurice Strong. It has been my special good fortune to have worked with Maurice Strong on two exciting international projects over the past decade—the Earth Charter Initiative and the UN University for Peace. As I have watched Maurice in action and come to know him, my admiration for his vision, dedication, and caring for people and our planetary home has steadily deepened. He is an awesome and inspiring model of a committed global citizen who tirelessly travels the planet as a catalyst for change, working with leaders in government, business, and civil society in an effort to build a better world for all. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities and guidance that he has provided me personally and for his visionary leadership in the international environmental, sustainable development, and peace movements.

My remarks will focus on the topic of global ethics, the sustainable development revolution, and the Earth Charter. I would like to introduce this subject by putting it in the context of the impassioned debate that we are having in this nation over the policies that should govern our international relations and over the role of American soft power.

American international relations are currently being directed by international affairs experts and national security analysts who identify themselves as realists and who argue that international relations are governed by the self-interest of sovereign states and by hard power, that is, economic and military might. They emphasize the use of military force to solve international problems and have advanced a new doctrine of reliance on preemptive military action—a doctrine that is contrary to accepted international law. Given U.S. military superiority, they are comfortable acting unilaterally. Their goals are to ensure national security at home, to promote freedom and democracy abroad, and to maintain America's economic and military supremacy in the world. They do not regard the progressive deterioration of Earth's ecosystems as a serious problem and do not promote sustainable development as an essential goal. Certain of the moral correctness of their cause, they regard the UN and international law treaties as more often than not unfortunate entanglements that constrict the free exercise of American hard power.

Many critics question whether this is a sound path to national security and to the promotion of freedom and democracy. They point out, for example, that the adoption of these attitudes and ideas by the Bush administration has eroded America's moral authority in the world and alienated many of our friends and allies, contributing to a disturbing rise in anti-Americanism. There is a very different way for the US to look at and approach the world. It is shared by many Republicans as well as Democrats who

have participated in building and supporting the UN system, the related multi-lateral institutions, and the system of international law since World War II.

This alternative outlook begins with recognition of the increasing interdependence of all nations and peoples. Under the impact of industrialization, modern technology, and economic globalization, what happens locally increasingly has a global impact ecologically, economically, and politically, and global events and trends influence local communities as never before. In such an interconnected world, no nation—not even the most powerful—can effectively address the environmental, economic, and social problems it faces and ensure the security of its people by acting alone. These problems include global warming, the depletion of resources, the degradation of ecosystems, population growth, mass poverty, the growing gap between rich and poor, financial instability, intolerance and discrimination, the spread of infectious disease, organized crime, terrorism, and war. In our interdependent world, national security is closely bound up with international security. The good of the American people or any other people cannot be separated from the global common good, especially if one takes a long-term view and an ecological view. Partnership and collaboration among nations and diverse cultures in the 21st century are essential to survival, environmental protection, and human development everywhere.

These reflections lead to the further conclusion that humanity has arrived at a point in its social and political evolution where creation of a just, sustainable, and peaceful world community is essential. Building such a global society in the midst of cultural diversity is humanity's ultimate political and social challenge. In our interdependent and insecure world, this evolutionary possibility has become a social and ecological necessity.

To be effective in an interdependent world where cooperation, multi-lateralism, and world community are essential to security and well-being, the United States must cultivate and rely on its soft power as well as its hard power in order to lead the struggle for freedom and protect America's vital interests. Joe Nye defines soft power as the ability of a nation to attract others by the legitimacy of its policies and the values that underlie them.[1] Addressing the subject of world peace in 1963, President Kennedy explicitly rejected the idea of "a Pax Americana enforced on the world by weapons of war."[2] As the Republican Senator Chuck Hagel puts its: "A wise foreign policy recognizes that U.S. leadership is determined as much by our commitment to principles as by our exercise of power."[3]

At this juncture, I would like to introduce a question that has not been fully and effectively addressed in the internal US debate over American international relations. In our interdependent and insecure world, what values and principles should US soft power affirm and support? There are, of course, the traditional American values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fair play, and so forth. However, I want to suggest that our national security and the current global situation demand an expanded vision that

is shaped by whole-hearted participation in the global dialogue on the ethical principles that should guide all peoples into our common future.

Advancing cooperation and building a global community requires mutual understanding and agreement on common goals and shared values. Only a firm commitment to shared values will create the trust, sense of common purpose, and will to act that makes partnership and collaborative problem solving possible and effective. In short, this means global ethics, involving a further evolution in humanity's ethical and spiritual consciousness. It involves working out through dialogue agreement on a core of fundamental ecological and social values that will give the complex and problematical process of globalization positive direction, reversing the current dangerous trends. This is the spiritual challenge presented by the industrial-technological civilization that is spreading over the planet. Every great civilization in world history has generated its own distinctive ethical and spiritual consciousness. The quest for a planetary ethic is part of the search for our spiritual center as planetary citizens of a globalizing technological civilization.

This brings me to the Earth Charter. It is a product of the global ethics movement that began with the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights over fifty years ago. These documents emphasize the values of human rights, equitable socio-economic development, and peace. Under the leadership of Maurice Strong in 1972, the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment identified environmental conservation as a new common concern of the United Nations and international community. Over the next decade, the study of environmental conservation led to a growing realization that the goals of environmental protection, poverty eradication, human development, and peace are all interrelated. This in turn led to construction of the concept of sustainable development, which has emerged over the last two decades as a new guiding ecological, economic, and social ideal.

The concept of sustainable development was first introduced to the international community by the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development), of which Maurice Strong was a member, in its report *Our Common Future*, published in 1987. In that report there is a call for creation of a new universal declaration or charter that sets forth fundamental values and principles for the transition to sustainable development. This recommendation led Maurice Strong as secretary-general of the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to make the drafting and adoption of an intergovernmental Earth Charter part of the Summit agenda. As a result of disagreements between the North and the South, governments were not able to draft an Earth Charter. Consequently, in 1994 Mr. Strong, as the new chairman of the Earth Council, joined with Mikhail Gorbachev, president of Green Cross International, to launch a new Earth Charter initiative as a civil society undertaking. Six years later in 2000 the Earth Charter Commission, which is made up of representatives from twenty-one countries from all regions of the world, launched the Earth Charter at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

The Earth Charter, which is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a equitable, sustainable, and peaceful world community, is especially significant for two reasons.[4] First, the drafting of the document involved the most open and participatory process that has ever been conducted in connection with the creation of an international declaration. It is the product of a decade-long, world wide, cross-cultural, interfaith dialogue on common goals and shared values. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals were engaged in the process. The Earth Charter secretariat was based in Costa Rica. National Earth Charter committees were set up in 50 different nations. Meetings were held throughout the world and on the internet. One two-week internet conference involved representatives from 70 countries and 300 universities. Both grass-roots community leaders, including indigenous peoples, and experts in many fields were all involved.

Second, the content of the Earth Charter reflects the consensus on shared values taking form in the emerging global civil society. The text builds on and extends international law in the fields of environmental conservation and sustainable development. It reflects the findings of the seven UN summit meetings held during the 1990s, especially the summits on environment, population, and women. It reflects a careful study of the ethical visions in over 200 people's treaties and NGO declarations issued over the past three decades and the influence of contemporary thought in science, religion, philosophy, and ethics.

In and through the give and take of the consultation and drafting process, the organizational structures and wording of the Earth Charter gradually took form. The final document has a Preamble, sixteen main principles, 61 supporting principles, and a conclusion entitled, "The Way Forward." The sixteen main principles are divided into four parts, and the titles of these four parts indicate the broad and inclusive nature of the Earth Charter vision.

Part	I	Respect and Care for the Community of Life
Part	II	Ecological Integrity
Part	III	Social and Economic Justice
Part	IV	Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace

At the heart of the Earth Charter lies an ethic of respect and care for the community of life as a whole in all its biological and cultural diversity.

The Earth Charter expands the ethical vision dominant in modern industrial technological society in a three-fold fashion. First, it seeks to deepen commitment to the human rights and human development of all the world's peoples, especially the poor, the vulnerable, and oppressed. In this regard, it promotes participatory, transparent, and accountable democratic governance, economic equity, and gender equality. Second, its goal is to awaken a new commitment to the human rights and well-being of future generations. Intergenerational responsibility is a core value of the ethics of sustainable

living. Third, its goal is to promote recognition that all life forms are interdependent members of the one community of life on Earth and all are worthy of respect and moral consideration.

There are two reasons to respect the larger living world. The first is an anthropocentric reason. We are dependent on the goods and services provided by Earth's ecosystems. It is, therefore, in our self-interest to protect and restore ecosystems and their biodiversity. Second, as affirmed by the World Charter for Nature and the Convention on Biological Diversity, all life forms have value regardless of their utilitarian value to people. In other words, they possess what some philosophers call intrinsic value. It is for this reason that the greater community of life and each life form is worthy of moral consideration. As the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development puts it: "the case for the conservation of nature should not rest only with development goals. It is part of our moral obligation to other living beings and future generations."[5]

It is quite probable that unless societies come to respect nature for itself as well as for its utilitarian value to people, it will not be possible to generate the change in human behavior necessary to achieve sustainability. In this regard, it is worth noting that a moral concern for all living beings is not a new idea. It is part of the teachings of indigenous peoples. It is supported by the Jain, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions. It can be found in the teachings of a number of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic theologians. Stated theologically, people do not have a right to destroy what God has created. The problem is that this ethical principle has been ignored or rejected by modern industrial technological society, which views nature apart from culture as merely a collection of resources that exists to be exploited by people. In the view of the Earth Charter, nature may be used but not abused. Use wood from the forest, but don't destroy the forest. Eat fish produced by the sea, but don't destroy the sea's capacity for regeneration.

Sometimes the Earth Charter is described as a declaration of global interdependence and universal responsibility. The Earth Charter adopted the concept of universal responsibility in part because it complements the idea of universal human rights. We all have rights and with those rights go responsibilities. Our ecological and social responsibilities, of course, are common but differentiated depending on our situations and capacities. In addition, since we live in a world where everything is interconnected, each one of us is to one degree or another responsible to all other beings for how we live and act. In this sense, too, our responsibility is universal. This idea is expressed clearly in the Preamble of the Earth Charter, which states that if we are to build a sustainable world community, "it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations." The Johannesburg Declaration, issued by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, contains an identical affirmation of universal responsibility.[6]

The Earth Charter principles culminate with a vision of a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace. The peace principle comes last –in Principle 16—because

building a culture of peace requires implementation of all the other principles. Peace is described as "the wholeness created by right relationship with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part." (16f) So defined, peace is conceived as an inclusive ethical and spiritual value.

Since the Earth Charter was formally launched in June 2000, it has been translated into 28 languages and disseminated around the world by the Earth Charter secretariat, which is affiliated with the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica. The document has been endorsed by thousands of NGOs and by several hundred individual cities as well as the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives. The World Resources Institute is designing a new guidebook and computer software program to assist local governments with developing goals, strategies, and measurable indicators for the implementation of Earth Charter principles. These materials will greatly enhance the practical and educational value of the Earth Charter. Information on this project can be found at http://www.earthcat.org.

In another development, the UNESCO General Conference of member states endorsed the Earth Charter in 2003 as "an important ethical framework for sustainable development" and as "an educational tool." UNESCO will incorporate the Earth Charter into the teaching materials it is preparing for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) that begins in 2005. UNESCO is also planning for the DESD to put a special emphasis on the values and behaviors required for sustainable living.[7]

In conclusion, it was the highly skilled prophetic leadership of Maurice Strong, more than any other person, that created the international framework, intellectual space, and wise guidance that made possible the creation of the ethical vision in the Earth Charter. The ethical values of a society reflect what people consider to be good and right. Our ethical commitments are about choosing what kind of persons we want to be and what quality of life we want for our communities. Science can inform our ethical thinking by making clear the consequences of alternative choices. However, in the final analysis, ethical choices are a matter of the imagination, the heart, and the will. The ethical choices that confront us today are as momentous as any humanity has ever faced. The accumulated effect of the choices of individual citizens and consumers can make the difference, forcing government and business to respond. We must hope that in the US this will lead to a renewal of interest in cultivating and asserting our soft power in international relations through government and private sector programs and to a new and firm commitment to the global common good and the vision of sustainable living in the Earth Charter.

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[1] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Decline of America's Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 83, No. 3(May/June 2004) 16. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford, 2002).

[2] As quoted in Senator Robert C. Byrd, *Losing America: Confronting a Reckless and Arrogant Presidency* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), pp. 139.

[3] Chuck Hagel, "A Republican Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 4 (July/August 2004):64-65. Regarding the principles that should govern US military action, the US should only attack another nation when it has attacked the US or an attack is clearly imminent. Military action against another nation under other circumstances should have the sanction of the UN Security Council or of some other appropriate international body that gives the action legitimacy in the eyes of the world community. Establishing such legitimacy is critical, argued Richard Nixon's former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in a UNA/USA speech in April, 2004.

[4] For more information on the Earth Charter, see the international Earth Charter secretariat website www.earthcharter.org.

[5] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford, 1987), p. 57.

[6] The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development states: "From this continent, the cradle of humanity, we declare, through the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the present Declaration, our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life and to our children." (Paragraph 6). For the complete text, see http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/Johannesburg%20Declaration.doc.

[7] For more information on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, see the UNESCO website: http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23279&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.